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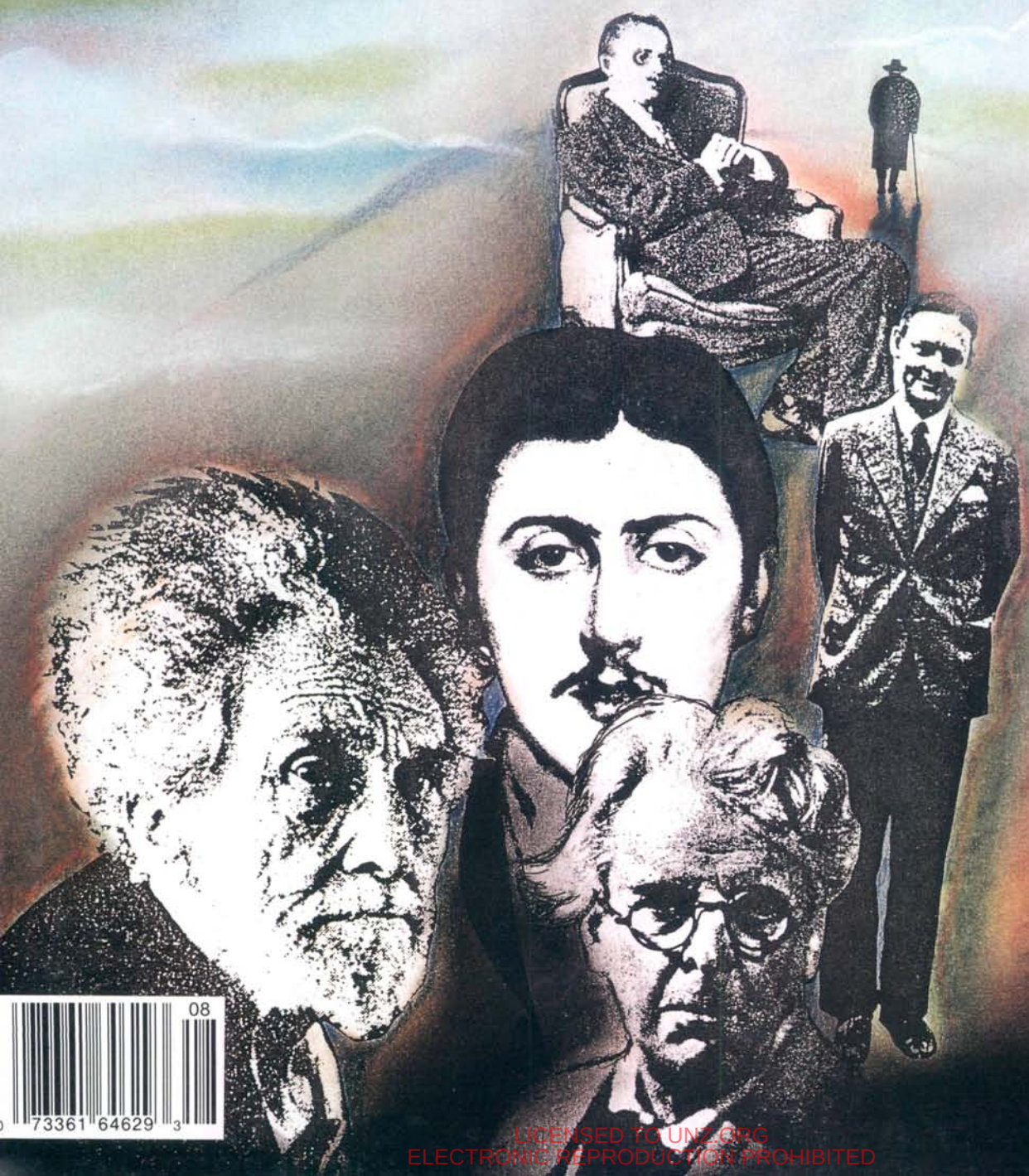

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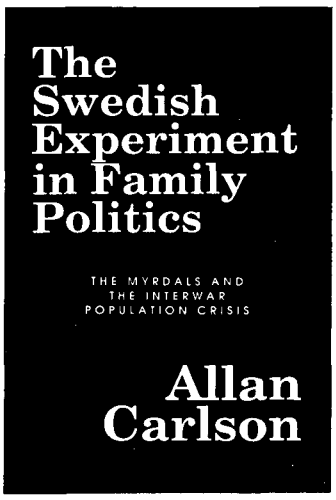

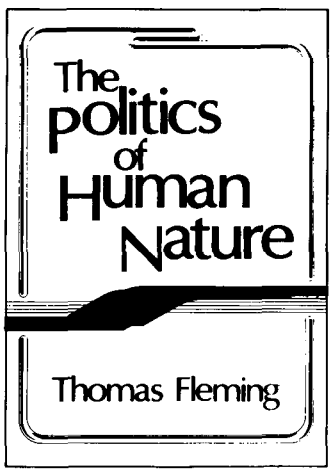

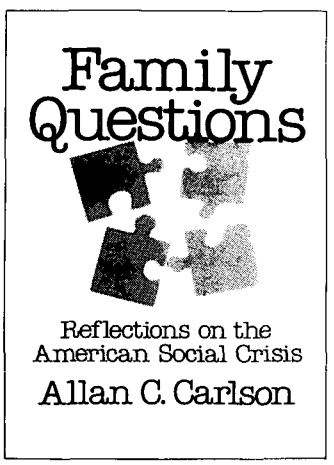

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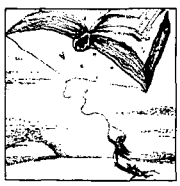

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A publication of The Rockford Institute.
Editorial and Advertising Offices:
934North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103.
Editorial Phone: (815) 964-5054.
Advertising Phone: (815) 964-5811.
Subscription Department: P. O. Box 800,
Mount Morris, IL 61054. Call 1-800-877-5459.
For information on advertising in *Chronicles*,
please call Rochelle Frank at (815) 964-5811.

U. S. A. Newsstand Distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 1130 Cleveland Road, Sandusky, OH 44870.

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Chronicles (ISSN 0887-5731) is published monthly for $ 24 per year by The Rockford Institute, 934 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103-7061. Second-class postage paid at Rockford, IL and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Chronicles*, P. O. Box 800, Mount Morris, IL 61054.

The views expressed in *Chronicles* are the authors' alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Rockford Institute or of its directors. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

Vol. 16, No. 8 August 1992

On 'Clarence Thomas'

I sure wouldn't want to cross Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr. In his semihysterical, mean-spirited diatribe (Cultural Revolutions, January 1992), he manages to charge Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas with perjury, perversion, and racial opportunism. And that's just for openers. Although I probably lost count, there are some twenty-five negative references to Thomas's character, ideology, or intellect. Being the Antichrist is about the only thing Rockwell doesn't accuse Thomas of (although "another Thurgood Marshall" may be the Rockwellian equivalent).

Granted, President Bush considered Thomas's race in selecting him as the nominee. Would Rockwell have rather seen Robert Bork renominated? Remember, this is a more liberal Senate than the one that rejected Bork for being "out of the mainstream." Or would Rockwell prefer another "stealth" candidate, like David Souter? Unless he can name a better candidate who would also be viable, he himself deserves the "whiner" label he pins on Thomas.

As most everyone concedes, the confirmation process is highly political. Bush had to win over a Senate that had become increasingly hostile to conservative nominees. An affirmative-action nomination of a black conservative was a brilliant move that eventually succeeded, despite a last-minute sexual harassment brouhaha. (Could any other nominee who had expressed reservations about affirmative action be confirmed?) Apparently, though, success does not satisfy Rockwell. Better to be defeated and remain ideologically pure, I suppose.

Finally, I would note that affirmative action is not morally objectionable so long as it is voluntary. It is only when racial or other preferences are codified into law (with punishments specified for transgressors) that they become anathema to freedom.

—Phillip Goldstein
Brooklyn, NY

Mr. Rockwell Replies:

Mr. Goldstein is right. There is nothing morally wrong with hiring and promoting on the basis of race. As Richard Epstein of the University of Chicago Law School demonstrates in *Forbidden Ground*, homogeneous firms also tend to be more efficient.

For the Supreme Court, we should seek homogeneity as well: no intellectual lightweights, let alone a 1970's liberal version. We need smart, courageous, and scholarly right-wingers. Mr. Thomas's ghostwriter did criticize "quotas." But during his confirmation hearings, Mr. Thomas testified under oath, again and again, that freedom of contract and association should be violated for egalitarian social engineering. We now know that, as an appeals court judge, Mr. Thomas endorsed affirmative action for blacks while opposing it for white women.

Did we really have to accept this neocon nonentity (or do I repeat myself)? Not if we had a man in the White House. Patrick Buchanan as President would nominate one brilliant conservative jurist after another, making a national fight over each. Eventually, the Senate would have to confirm one, and in the meantime, the public would learn about the nature of a constitutional republic. The Thomas hearings, on the other hand, were one long victimological aria. As to those more qualified than Mr. Thomas, *Chronicles* refuses to allow me the rest of this issue for the A's.

On 'Germany'

Jacob Neusner, in his "Letter From Germany" (December 1991), assesses the academic apathy of Germany, pointing out that "the National Socialists got rid of the talent as well as the entrenched mediocrity." Which is to say that Nazism destroyed not just the "drags" of the old Germany, but also the society's protected classes, and the true "aristocracy."

This is a "truism" that, like most, is indeed true. And is brilliant in its simplicity. Indeed, the statement is very applicable to current events. It seems as if most Americans have now forgotten that a similar purge took place in the Soviet Union, as it does in all ideological societies. To simply presume that the people of Nazi Germany, or Soviet Russia, could be remade without any lingering

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impact from the genocide of certain groupings of people, or more importantly, from living with "the idea," is foolish.

With that said, I must strongly disagree with the final point of Neusner's piece. Neusner says: "For our part, we never conceived a Marshall Plan of ideas, a rebuilding of the ruined intellectual life of a great country." Not only does he imply that somehow America, and Americans, are responsible for the well-being of other nations, he also hints that "if something has gone wrong, blame America first." Neusner would apparently have the United States accept the role not only of economic guarantor of nations like Germany, but also of intellectual provider.

Leaving aside the fact that, to a very real degree, the United States in the late 18th century did provide an intellectual Marshall Plan for the world (at least in the realm of governance) with such documents as the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and most specifically, the United States Constitution; there are other problems with Neusner's statement. First, the economic "rebuilding" the United States engaged in after World War II really did not help any nation, save for perhaps Japan. It made Europe an American colony for an elongated, if not permanent, time frame. And worse, for America, it made Americans both responsible for maintaining an empire and for transforming a defeated enemy into an economic rival. One could only surmise that a Marshall Plan of ideas would not have been any more successful than was the economic one.

Also, with the morass in America's mass cultural and intellectual life over the past fifty years, it is not only correct that it was best for America not to attempt to take on the responsibility for a Marshall Plan of ideas for Germany, it is also good for Germany that we did not force American ideas on German culture. Even the academic void that Neusner speaks of seems better than the academic devolution in the United States. Oh, our professors form "intellectual communities" all right, and they even engage in vigorous debate; the problem is they have nothing to do with reality, and no connection to unifying our society.

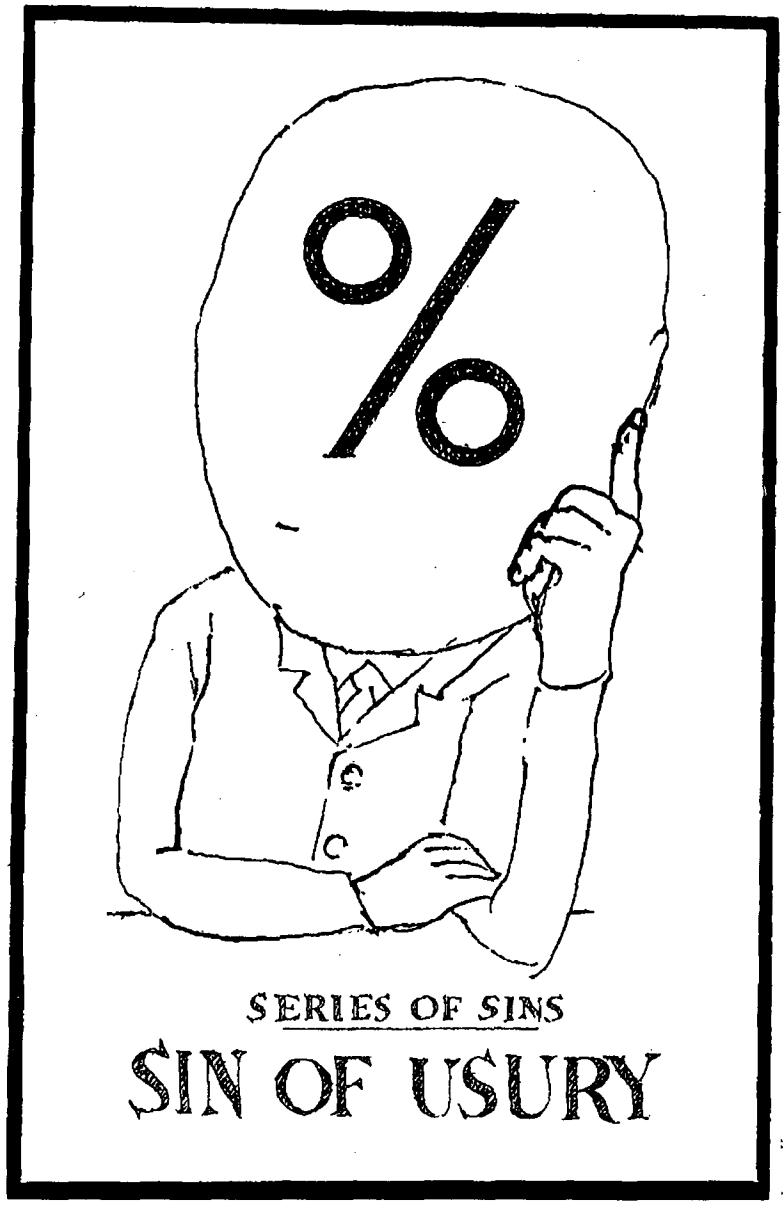
But no need to worry, for Neusner will get his way at last. The Marshall Plan of ideas is currently being exported, along with our taxpayer dollars, to the Soviet Union. It will probably have the same, or more likely worse, consequences for the recipients than the original Marshall Plan has had on Western Europe. America will get some relief: with our "intellectuals" gone to ruin the Soviets for awhile, at least we will be rid of them.

Unfortunately, this is merely a cure for the symptom, rather than for the underlying problem. The real remedy will only be found when we have a Marshall Plan of ideas for America, or more accurately, a return to those ideas that made America a great republic, before the rise of the empire.

—Thomas C. Lizardo,
National Vice Chairman,
Young Americans for Freedom,
Fairfax, VA

Dr. Neusner Replies:

I cannot disagree with Mr. Lizardo's letter; we are on the same side on most issues. I meant the reference to a Marshall Plan of ideas to be a bit cynical, since, like Mr. Lizardo, I am not sure we have all that much to offer. That was the subtext of my statement; admittedly, it was buried altogether too deep to register. I certainly agree that we ought to take a modest view of our capacities, both economic and intellectual, and first of all to rebuild here at home. It is good to find in YAF eloquent and alert minds such as his; the coming generation will then have good ideas to export: the ones on which this country is founded, as he rightly says. We must first make them our own—once more.



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THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION has rediscovered the family. A year ago, White House minions strove to torpedo the Final Report of the National Commission on Children, worried that its recommendation of tax relief for families with children might upset the hallowed "budget agreement" with Congress. Today, with one eye on the embers of Los Angeles and the other nervously on the polls, the Bush team is in the family way.

The theme first reappeared as an explanation for the Los Angeles riots. The programs of the Great Society, Marlin Fitzwater lectured the country, "have undermined family values." Translated from pol-speak, this means "have encouraged illegitimate births among blacks." For his part, Mr. Bush promised that he would use enterprise zones to restore family values in the cities.

A few days later, Vice-President Dan Quayle struck out on his own, arguing that "the failure of our families is hurting America deeply. . . . Children need mothers and fathers. A welfare check is not a husband. The state is not a father. . . . Bearing babies irresponsibly is, simply, wrong." He then moved to his famed attack on the TV character "Murphy Brown," chiding "her" for "mocking the importance of fathers by bearing a child alone and calling it just another 'life-style choice.'"

The conventional media gasbags quickly pounced on Mr. Quayle, gleefully anticipating his political castration. But alas, the opinion polls came to his rescue. I happened to be watching a New York City newscast that day, featuring a team of all-female commentators denouncing this "gaffe" and celebrating the huge embarrassment it would bring the White House, when they turned to their "900 Line" pollster to measure the popular outrage. Clearly unscripted, the latter reported that 74 percent of New York City callers *supported* Mr. Quayle. A pall descended on the set, and the anchorperson confessed, "I frankly don't understand." This real-life Murphy Brown broke for a commercial.

The Vice-President, in fact, gives every sign of earnestness on the question, and understands the power of his modest, but real, pulpit on moral questions. Mr. Bush, for his part, sees "family values" as another wedge issue, the obverse side of his Willie Horton coin, a way to play on black-white tensions for electoral advantage while camouflaging his administration's studied disregard for family issues during its first three-and-a-half years.

Indeed, the very basis of the Bush analysis of inner-city morals is flawed. If black illegitimacy is the culprit, then "the failed programs of the Great Society," launched in the 1965-68 period, had nothing to do with it. The real statistical evidence could be read to argue that these programs actually helped *reduce* the problem. Census Bureau data show that the dramatic rise in the black "illegitimacy rate" (births per one thousand unmarried black women, ages 15-44) occurred well before the Kennedy-Johnson years, climbing from 35.6 in 1940 to 100.8 in 1959. During the Great Society era, the black illegitimacy rate actually *declined* from 100.8 in 1961 to 76.0 in 1975.

What the Bush administration labors to avoid, here, is the painful truth that America's moral and cultural unraveling has very deep roots. Politically, it was the New Deal—not the Great Society—that drastically altered the incentives. The Social Security Act and its subsequent accretions worked to bludgeon the natural family economy, transferring all of the dependency functions (the care of the old, the sick, the weak, and the young) from families to the state. "Wouldn't be prudent" to touch that sacred cow. Equally painful would be the admission that the grand national mobilization of World War II launched the sexual revolution, disrupting inherited local and religious restraints on the libido. "Wouldn't be prudent" to point out that modern wars—even the "Good War" or the "Easy War" (the divorce rate for Persian Gulf War vets is soaring)—always bring social and moral dislocation in their wake.

George Bush truly believes in what Murray Rothbard has called the welfare-warfare state. As fighter pilot, moderate congressman, CIA director, and Chief Executive, Mr. Bush has been devoted to advancing and protecting the state apparatus constructed by Franklin D. Roosevelt. Enterprise zones and most other parts of the Bush-Kemp "New Vision" are merely variations on the New Deal managed economy, and can only augment the government's control over private life, including private family life. This explains the near enthusiasm shown by the *Nation*, the *New York Times*, and other outlets on the left for the Bush-Kemp urban plan, and it also explains why the urban nightmare of the 1990's has only just begun.

— *Allan Carlson*

AFTER THE RIOTS, fires, and looting in Los Angeles, both Jack Kemp, secretary for Housing and Urban Development, and Jesse Jackson blamed the federal government—not for failing to send in the military, but for not providing enough social and economic therapy. Here is Kemp's analysis, on the *MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour*, of why blacks and Hispanics burned down large parts of Los Angeles, killed 58 people, and destroyed ten thousand buildings: "When an economy begins to contract, when the pie is shrinking, when people are out of work, when a father cannot put bread on the table for his children, when families don't have a stake in a neighborhood and live on the welfare plantation . . . you get hopelessness and despair. Now, I'm not excusing rioting or killing or plundering property. . ."

Set aside the doubtful contention that fathers in the inner city have no bread to feed their children (a classic justification for theft). A recession is economy-wide, and many people lose their jobs. Most are not moved to murder. By blaming rioting, killing, and plundering on a shrinking economy, he is saying people do not have the free will to resist the temptation to act immorally. It follows that he is making excuses.

While Jackson wants to expand traditional welfare programs, Kemp says he has some better ideas: "There are people who are frustrated and [without] hope—have a despair about their lives and this is happening too often to those young teenagers who are turning to the streets. And we've got to change their attitude and their expectations about the future. And the only way to do that, in my view, is good education, more jobs for the inner cities, a better tax base

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for our cities, and investing in ownership of property in our cities."

That "solution" sounds strangely like traditional welfare. True, he wants the poor to own property. But what Great Society liberal has ever opposed that? The question is whose property the poor are supposed to own: property they've earned, or property that has been confiscated from the middle class and redistributed?

At a time when most of the middle class can't buy homes, Kemp wants taxpayers to give homes, *gratis*, to inner-city residents. Making monthly payments to a landlord apparently doesn't give people a "stake in their community." Somehow, we are supposed to believe that making monthly payments to a government mortgage company does. But until social science establishes a causal link between being a renter and being a felon, Kemp's program is of questionable value.

His idea of home ownership might not be objectionable if existing public housing were sold to the poor at the same rate it cost taxpayers to build them. That's what Samuel T. Pierce, Kemp's predecessor at HUD, was doing before being run out of town. But Kemp's housing sales have been far more costly. For example, converting the Kennelworth-Parkside project in Washington, D. C., to "tenant-owned" properties cost taxpayers about $170,000 per unit. And for each unit sold, the law says, another government-owned unit must be built.

Oddly, Kemp's program does not really institute formal ownership at all. The few who make it through HUD's red tape to take possession of their units are not allowed to resell homes on the market. How is that different from renting? Where's the incentive to take care of the property? Thank goodness Congress granted HUD's HOPE program only one third of the $1 billion Kemp had asked for in fiscal year 1993.

When Kemp complains the government "prevents poor people from saving," he means he wants to raise the ceiling on assets held by welfare recipients. He argues that people on welfare should be able to save up to $10,000—ten times the amount allowed under present law—and still receive checks from Uncle Sam. But that would remove an important incentive to get off welfare, which is the desire to earn and save more income. In fact, removing the ceiling on income would make millions of new people eligible and lead to a vast expansion of welfare rolls.

Primary among Kemp's ideas is the enterprise zone, which designates sections of cities for low taxes and special grants to promote new businesses. If Congress passes his legislation, he promises that inner-city poor will open new businesses, and that this will give them a "stake in their communities." The trouble for Kemp is that Los Angeles already has an enterprise zone program, according to a 1990 article in *Plants, Sites, and Parks* magazine. And the zone covers the South-Central Los Angeles area that the mobs reduced to ash. For years, the state of California offered generous incentives for investment in zoned areas. This included tax credits of $19,000 per new employee, sales tax credits on new machinery up to $1.2 million, tax incentives for lenders who make business loans, 15-year carry-over of net operating losses and depreciation, subsidized rents, and marketing assistance. California's zone program was partly responsible for creating new minority-owned businesses in Los Angeles's poor areas, but the beneficiaries were not the inner-city blacks that Mr. Kemp wants to lift out of poverty. They were industrious Korean immigrants who probably would have opened businesses anyway. Eight hundred of their new enterprises were burned to the ground.

Given past experience at the state level, moreover, the beneficiaries of enterprise zone programs have been businesses that decide to *relocate* to better tax environments. But if private property cannot be secured against vandals, and insurance companies are reluctant to take on high risks, even zero taxes will fail to convince major businesses to move to high-crime areas.

Finally, what is giving the poor "a stake in their community" really all about? They already have "a stake in their community": they live there. If that doesn't suffice, it's hard to know what would.

Perhaps Kemp should spend less time granting interviews and more time managing HUD, the job the taxpayers pay him to do. A recent audit conducted by the General Accounting Office found that the agency has lost track of more than $1 billion. This is the sixth audit in the three years Mr. Kemp has run HUD that has warned of waste, mismanagement, and possible fraud. An audit conducted by Price Waterhouse last year was so negative that he still refuses to release it publicly. Why should Kemp be counted on to save our cities from further destruction when he can't get his own agency's financial house in order?

Jack Kemp has become the Jesse Jackson of the right, pushing huge federal government programs for problems that are fundamentally local, cultural, and moral. On the other hand, the financial and political base for his 1996 presidential bid is coming along nicely.

—Jeffrey A. Tucker

LOS ANGELES was bopped by debris crumbling loose from twenty-five years of a Great Society gone goofy, or so believe the callers from all over America with whom I talk for three hours on weekday afternoons. These talk-show callers are angry, frightened, and baffled.

They're angry at pictures of rabble marching on Korean grocers like peasants off to Frankenstein's castle. They're fuming at the insult of the moral, drawn by the civil-rights community, that when a black is beaten by police, it's the fault of the police; when Koreans are beaten by mobs, it's the fault of the Koreans. Callers figure that neither rage nor fear explain the frenzy of a police attack upon an unarmed motorist or the mob's attack upon truck drivers and Asians.

Callers are angered by people like Democratic Congresswoman Maxine Waters, who named the days of looting "The New American Insurrection." Like the furious Boston caller angered by Waters' contention that he didn't understand black rage, "Hell, that's the cry of the New Frontiersman: 'You can't understand what you refuse to subsidize.'" Callers have a simpler explanation for the riots: "When Congress is looting Washington, why be surprised that their clients loot South-Central L. A.?"

People are furious over Jesse Jackson's call for a Day of Protest on June 19. "Victim's Day," as a Philadelphia man says, "A great plan. Wait till the temperatures bubble—then call a strike into the streets. Victim's Day is another word for 'HOORAY' to contractors who build bars onto merchants' windows." A woman in Hartford wondered whether "Jackson hired his strategist from Bank of New England."

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Callers noted the one common denominator on the faces of the rioters—pimples. A Miami caller said, "Those were children—*Lord of the Flies* gone weird. These kids in their designer running shoes seem like Beirut in Air Jordans. After twenty-five years of Great Society spending," he wondered, "what [were these] well-intentioned policies [that] have so dissolved family discipline?"

Callers of all colors are frightened. They know that twenty-five years of poverty programs could buy the total assets of the Fortune 500 companies with enough money leftover to purchase all of their country's farmland—and what has it bought? A man from Dover was "terrified watching middle-class fathers huddled in their doorways, pistols protecting their families." He was afraid that he "might be just a Second Amendment away from the Crips and Bloods. Gun fun on the New Frontier." Or, as a Texas bumper sticker puts it, "Guns, the Final Frontier."

And finally callers are baffled by the media. "Why," a Denver lady asked, "after thousands of showings of the most grisly parts of the Rodney King tape, was there no discussion anywhere of the possibility of a not-guilty verdict coming out of Simi Valley? Why weren't we prepared in any way?"

Then picture this. L. A. is still in flames, looters pillage the streets, the governor of California, seeking calm, goes on *CBS Morning News* with Paula Zahn who asks, "Governor Wilson, how do you respond to critics who charge that the riots were the direct result of failed Republican policies?" "THUNK," the sound of mouths dropping wide! "That was an editorial, not a question," a Tacoma caller argued. And how does the caller explain Zahn's politics? "The fact that she's up after sunrise shoots my vampire theory all to hell."

Watching television newspeople work during the May Mess was, to many, like getting signals from Mars. A Maine caller wondered if "they booked guests from Horton, Hill, and King—the Speakers Bureau run by Willie, Anita, and Rodney, a crew that even discriminating reptiles normally shun." Television was loaded with advocates for everything from multicultural textbooks to defenders of free condoms. A New Orleans man noted that, "While one group explained L. A. was caused by Bush's international junkets and inattention to the cities, another urged him to join Al Gore and the Greenies on their conga line to Rio!" Yet amidst all this, a Nashville caller said, "Television's concern for the welfare of Koreans or care for the victims of a quarter century of tax rape came and went so fast—it amounted to subliminal sensitivity."

Callers were confounded by TV coverage that argued that the solution to the melee in the streets was a whole lot more of the Democrats' Great Society. And a Cincinnati woman pointed out that "every tottering municipality has been governed by Democrats for years." Another guy from St. Louis said, "Ted, if LBJ were a city, why he'd be L. A.!"

—*Ted Byrne*

SOUTH AFRICA'S March 17 referendum led the government to toughen its position against the ANC. Within a month after the results, Mr. de Klerk got the ANC at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) to agree to the election of a transitional government, the interim government the ANC had wanted *appointed*. The ANC had wanted CODESA (whose name echoes the Congress of Democrats—COD—a front organization founded in 1953 by the South African Communist Party after its banning in 1950) to mask the transfer of power to itself. The government was able to win this concession not only because of its two-to-one victory at the referendum, but because Mangosuthu Buthelezi and the Zulu organization, Inkatha, had insisted at CODESA on an elected interim government. The government frequently suspected of private deals with the ANC owes whatever strength this victory shows to the Zulus, who also insisted that no elections for a transitional government occur before the ANC renounces violence unequivocally, another demand the government adopted more or less at the time it demanded an elected transitional government. It also demanded that the ANC transform itself into a political party, and that it lend its support to the creation of conditions for free and fair elections without coercion or interference. These demands presuppose a fundamental change of heart in the ANC, a change the government thinks possible because it believes the ANC to be different from European terrorist organizations like the Baader-Meinhof gang. In any case, there is no agreement on the form of the elections or the form of the transitional government, especially on whether there will be two houses with an upper house, with a veto, elected on proportional representation, which the government demands. More importantly, the violence in the townships, and the chaos and intimidation, makes elections impossible for a long time, as even a visiting committee of international jurists recently stated publicly. The government estimates that it will be at least a year before elections, but the real question is whether they will ever be possible without fierce intimidation.

The ANC's tie to terrorist activity has been central to the situation ever since Mr. de Klerk decided to release Nelson Mandela in February 1990 without his renunciation of violence, a condition his predecessor, P. W. Botha, would not have waived. De Klerk implicitly recognized his break with Botha in the wording of the referendum that dated the "reform process" from Mandela's release. During the campaign, however, President de Klerk blamed Botha for starting reform after Botha attacked him for gradual abdication. Botha then announced he would vote against the referendum, a statement carried the next day on the seven o'clock news but not on the eight o'clock, with its greater audience. Earlier at the first meeting of CODESA, Mr. de Klerk's criticism of the ANC for not renouncing violence provoked a 25-minute attack from Mandela, live on television. De Klerk had "to forget [the notion] that he can impose conditions on the ANC," Mandela said, calling him the head of "a discredited, illegitimate, minority government." Mandela and other members of the ANC later made it clear they had no intention of renouncing terror or "armed struggle," as they put it. Mandela clearly thrives on violence, understandably—since it was terror, and the international support it won him and the ANC, that got his release. In the end, after 27 years, it was the South African government that yielded to him, not he to it, an act that did not win his respect.

Mandela's attack made a profound impression on South Africans who typically respect their leaders and can tell the difference between tough criticism and abuse. Mandela's scorn made undeniable the gradual erosion in the authority of the police, army, judges, and most importantly even Parliament itself,

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another word for the "reform process." By agreeing to CODESA Mr. de Klerk undermined his own Parliament, just as his exclusive preoccupation with the ANC at CODESA kept him from dealing with all blacks—not only Buthelezi but also the other homeland leaders, especially Mangope of Bophuthatswana—who truly want to negotiate instead of using talks merely to seize power.

De Klerk's preoccupation with the ANC and its international support may have also led him to consent to the exclusion of moderate groups from CODESA, among them the church groups and the elected town councillors, who incidentally are now critical of the National Party. In contrast to these groups and to the homeland leaders, whose support can only be guessed at, nobody really knows how much of a following the ANC enjoys.

During the referendum campaign President de Klerk's appeal to 70 foreign governments for support of a "yes" vote also betrayed his preoccupation with the ANC's international connections. Instead of explaining his policies, he tried to intimidate the voters. As one of the best South African journalists, Ken Owen, wrote, President de Klerk claims "that he will insist on free enterprise, but he does not say exactly how that will be achieved. He talks of protecting private property, but does not really explain whether it will be achieved by the bill of rights, or tell us when and how the state might expropriate land. He says the constitution will protect minority representation, and he puts forward such curious mechanisms as a revolving presidency, which is unlikely to last, but he does not explain to the voters the more important concept of proportional representation (which not one in a hundred South Africans understands)." To win any kind of confidence, constitutions have to be discussed thoroughly in public before their adoption, for there is no way a people can trust a government it does not understand, especially a people whose majority has no political experience.

The government's acquiescence to Mandela's refusal to renounce violence, which Mr. de Klerk now seeks to undo, has had immediate consequences. A year after Mandela's release, fear among whites was palpable, especially of car hijackings at stop lights—the drivers sometimes murdered. In 1990, the year of Mandela's release, political killings rose to 2,674 in contrast to 659 the year before, and 28,000 people died violent deaths (in both criminal and political killings) in the 18 months before the end of 1991. Assigning the ANC's terrorism to the realm of "township violence" has blurred the distinction between political and criminal killings, the latter usually seven times more frequent. Except for the fighting in Alexandra and other townships in the spring of 1991 and 1992, most of this violence has received much less attention in the American press than the more limited violence under P. W. Botha. In Alexandra in 1992, ANC killers were said to run wildly through the streets firing AK-47s at random with plentiful supplies of ammunition—in contrast to the Zulus who fought with traditional weapons, an imbalance rarely mentioned by the newspapers that usually seek to blame both sides equally. Perhaps the newspapers avoid reporting these stories in detail because they do not want to face their and the American government's role in bringing about the violence.

The real story is that the ANC, because of its greed for power, is keeping the country from the constructive change almost everybody wants. The government runs the risk of colluding with the ANC not only because of destructive and self-destructive international pressure, especially from Britain and the United States, but perhaps also because the government prefers the company of cutthroats and ex-convicts to the company of people who respect their country enough to know that no change would be worth much that comes of fear rather than consent. Buthelezi and the Zulus, who have taken the positions one would have expected of the government and who have contributed most to the little stability there is in South Africa, have been constantly snubbed and sidelined, the reward for men of courage and reason in an irrational situation.

—Leo Raditsa

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by Samuel Francis

The Buchanan Revolution, Part II

The greatest irony of the periodic political revolutions that occur in American democracy is that most of the voters who make them possible have not the foggiest notion of what they are doing. In 1932, Franklin Roosevelt won the White House by promising to balance the budget and reduce the scale and power of the federal government, and there is no doubt that most of the Americans who sent him to Washington supported him simply because of the desperate economic straits in which they found themselves and their country, not because of any passion they shared with him for the socialist and internationalist experiments that he and his brood immediately imposed. The same could be said for almost all the major presidential elections in our history. The truth is that the concepts of the "people's will" and the "mandate" are largely political fictions that serve to mask the ambitions of the small cadres who run governments at all times, regardless of the forms and rhetorical dressing these elites assume.

The same is true of the Buchanan revolution of the 1990's, and the claim by its opponents that most of the voters who supported Mr. Buchanan in the Republican primaries did so as a "protest vote" and not because of any serious endorsement of the candidate's ideas is thus largely irrelevant, even if true. Let us say that only some 10 percent of the average 30 percent vote Mr. Buchanan received before Super Tuesday this year actually agreed with his ideas, while the others who voted for him were merely protesting the state of the economy and the lackluster leadership of the incumbent or simply pulled the wrong lever or got Pat Buchanan mixed up with the predecessor of Abraham Lincoln. That means that Mr. Buchanan's meaningful support was still comparable to the total vote received by one of his principal ideological rivals, Jack Kemp, whose average take of the Republican primary vote in 1988 was less than 5 percent. Nevertheless, the fans of Mr. Kemp to this day actually believe that his eagerness to redefine conservatism so as to win the plaudits of the left and the urban underclass is just the ticket for the political future, both within the Republican Party as well as in the country at large. You may not have to fool all the people all the time in order to make a political revolution, but you do have to befuddle more than one out of twenty. So far only Mr. Buchanan has been able to come close to building a new national political coalition that not only offers an alternative to President Bush's centrist establishmentarianism but also seeks to articulate a political myth that can bridge or transcend the obsolete categories of right and left entirely.

What has happened in the Buchanan revolution, as I argued in this space last month, is the emergence of a new political identity that focuses on the concrete interests of the nation and of a particular cultural and political force—Middle America—as the defining core. Mr. Buchanan was by no means the first to give political expression to this force, and he may not be the one who carries it to a successful revolutionary fulfillment. Perhaps it was David Duke who actually initiated it in recent times, and perhaps it will be H. Ross Perot who brings it to fruition. But Mr. Duke, for obvious reasons, was not an acceptable spokesman, and Mr. Perot, for all the charm of his accent, will probably be unable to accomplish its agenda. The Texas billionaire has all the political sophistication of a man who watches the *Today* show at least three times a week and believes everything he hears on it, and his unwillingness or inability to tell anyone what he would actually do about the various crises he has cribbed from television and weekly news magazines suggests that he would be quickly devoured by existing political elites if he really arrived in Washington. Mr. Perot displays the typical naiveté of businessmen, who always suffer under the delusion that government operates just like the enterprise they and their golfing partners command. He may succeed in winning the Buchanan vote, and he may win the White House, but if he does, he will discover that giving orders to Congress, federal officials, lobbies, interest groups, and foreign powers is not the same as peddling computers or telling secretaries to retype his letters.

Yet regardless of who began it and who will finish it, the Middle American Revolution is not going to go away. None of its political leaders created the social movement on which it rests, and it will survive their own personalities and campaigns. Indeed, it was predictable as long ago as the early Reagan administration that something like the movement would emerge sooner or later and that it would displace "conservatism," if not also "liberalism."

The Reagan movement also was to a large extent a political expression of the economic and cultural frustrations of Middle Americans, but no sooner had Mr. Reagan settled himself in the White House than his administration was captured by the "Soft Right"—not only neoconservatives but also the Republican Establishment and the whole swarm of Court Conservatives who sought employment of their otherwise unemployable talents in the vast public relief system known as the federal government. The Court Conservatives included almost all the policy eggheads, direct-mail tycoons, 50-year-old youth leaders, and hack journalists who had passed themselves off as the Mainstream Right for the last generation. They came to imagine that their occupation of office, their endless series of soirees and roasts dedicated to congratulating themselves, and their rapid abandonment of every significant political principle they had entoned for the last twenty or thirty years constituted a "conservative revolution," no matter how many new government agencies were created or old ones preserved to give them the jobs and social glamour they had always been denied in their much-ballyhooed private sector.

It was hardly surprising, therefore, that the apparatchiks of the Soft Right core of the Reagan administration at once forgot, if they had ever been cognizant of, the Middle American constituencies that had elected Mr. Reagan and made their fortunes for them, and for the remainder of the 1980's, Court Conservatives devoted themselves to figuring out how they could betray their Middle American base and, as they liked to put

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it, "lure" more blacks and Hispanics into Republican ranks and otherwise more credibly convince the archons of liberalism how harmless they were. The end result, of course, was the Kemp campaign in 1988, and it was hardly surprising that a candidate who sought to win the votes of a largely white, suburban, middle-class party by telling its voters how he wanted to make the black and Hispanic underclass the focus of his party through larger and more expensive government programs received less than 5 percent in the primaries.

But not only were the Court Conservatives assimilated by the glitter offered by the incumbent elite of Washington. As the Reagan administration rumbled on, the main funding mechanisms of organized conservatism through direct mail began to wither. Contributors either concluded that with the Gipper in the Oval Office delivering nasty cracks about the Evil Empire every Saturday, civilization had been saved, or they found that the groups and personalities to whom they had once given money had either ceased to function or were transparently unable to accomplish what they had vowed to do—to end abortion, restore prayer in schools, regain the Panama Canal, crush labor unions, string up the commies, and clean the purse snatchers and rapists off the streets. Unable to finance their dubious causes, the Court Conservatives turned to the organized philanthropy of foundations and corporations, which had little use for a Middle American agenda and were happily married to the same set of managerial interests in preserving the Leviathan state as the forces most conservatives had always claimed to oppose.

With the assimilation of the Mainstream Right in the Reagan administration and the disintegration of its main financial and political base, the Middle American constituency of the administration and of most of the right was decapitated and ceased to be represented, and the prospects for the emergence of what for lack of a better term may be called a Hard Right based on Middle American alienation dimmed. The success of the Soft Right, however, could be only temporary, because its success meant that the Middle American political constituency on which its occupation of office depended was being ignored, aside from politically expedient gestures such as the Willie Horton ads in 1988. Sooner or later, economic dislocations and the drift to the left of the Soft Right and the Reagan-Bush administrations, coupled with residual alienation on the part of Middle American forces, meant that a serious political movement representing their interests and aspirations would be possible.

The significance of the Buchanan movement, then, is not that it is simply one more crusade of the "conservative movement," a movement that has all but disappeared as a serious political force and a coherent intellectual identity, but that it has shown, contrary to what was commonly believed on both right and left, that a "Hard Right" remains politically possible, not merely as an intellectual irritation but as a political movement able to gather a nationwide coalition of voters, attract culturally significant support, and (in 1992) at least threaten a sitting President. Obviously, if that is all it remains, it will soon devolve into the same kind of political and ideological ghetto that the Court Conservatives were, and if it ever happened to win a national election, it would soon find itself swallowed by the same entrenched powers that gobbled the Reaganites.

But the main reason the Reaganites were so easily assimilated by the incumbent elites was not only the fundamental intellectual shallowness and lack of character of so many of their leaders but also the simple fact that they remained preoccupied with the formalities of political power and were blissfully oblivious to its cultural underpinnings. Whereas the Old Right of the 1960's prided itself on its cultural sophistication (which it confused with living and working in Manhattan and socializing with Manhattanite intellectual luminaries), the New Right of the 1970's and 80's liked to boast of its pragmatism and its scorn for ideas, culture, and the intellectual classes that are at the center of every successful modern political movement. The anti-intellectualism of the New Right was a principal reason why it was unable to govern once it had won elections in the 1980's and why it was so easily absorbed by neoconservative elements who never had any intention of pursuing any kind of authentic conservative agenda. Once in office, New Rightists found that they had no clear conception of what they were supposed to do or how to do it, and the only people around who purported to know were ex-liberals eager to creep back into the crevices of the state from which they had been momentarily exiled.

If the Buchanan movement or the Middle American Revolution or the New Nationalism or whatever it is going to call itself is to survive and develop as a serious force in American politics, it needs to do more than merely raise more money, build a national political organization, or expand its list of voters. It needs to create a counterculture that can sustain its political leaders once they hold office and develop the cultural and intellectual underframe that legitimizes political efforts. It must construct its cultural base not on the metropolitan elites of the dominant culture but on emerging forces rooted in Middle American culture itself. It is exactly that kind of cultural permeation that sets the stage for successful political revolution as well as for any successful government, "revolutionary" or not. Instead of grabbing the shadow of political power and desperately hoping that the incumbent elites will be fooled into letting it have the substance of power, it develops a social and political force independent of the dominant culture, and when that force is sufficiently mature, the snake will shed its skin. The new, emerging force will find the acquisition of political power and the winning of elections relatively easy as the old elite loses legitimacy and the new one not only acquires but also defines legitimacy.

For all the rhetoric about "populism" on both right and left for the last twenty years or so, revolutions never succeed simply because the "people" want them and issue a "mandate" for them to happen. No government ever falls, wrote Lenin, unless it is first "dropped" by the governing elite that holds it, and no government ever rises unless another elite is willing to pick it up and push it into place. The authentic populist revolt of 1992 that has surfaced in the campaigns of Mr. Duke, Mr. Perot, and Mr. Buchanan is the most powerful current in American politics today, but it will not succeed by virtue of its own momentum but only by finding leadership that is able and willing to carry it to enduring and meaningful power.

Samuel Francis's column in the Washington Times *replaced Patrick Buchanan's syndicated column while Mr. Buchanan campaigned for the presidency.*

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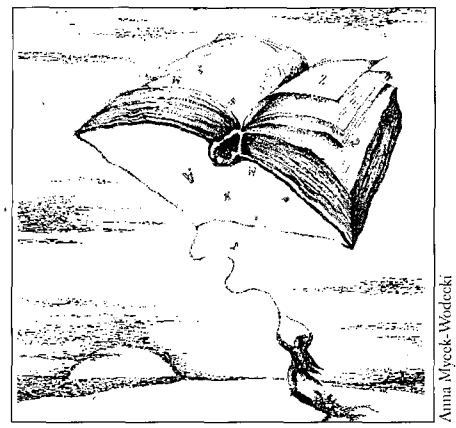
I Love to Tell the Story

by Thomas Fleming



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

My old teacher, the classicist (and Scots Nationalist) Douglas Young, once interrupted a boring conversation about television by declaring loudly, "Speaking of Aeschylus . . ." When one of his naive colleagues insisted, "But Douglas, no one was speaking about Aeschylus," Young responded, "Yes, but I want to be speaking of Aeschylus." This month, when I ought to be writing an essay on why virtually every really good American poet of the 30's hated Franklin Roosevelt, I have decided, instead, to be speaking about Aeschylus, or rather about the moral and social significance of literature.

What is art good for, anyway? The older critics used to declare that the functions of poetry were two: entertainment and instruction. There may be other, more vital functions for all I know, but the billions of dollars we Americans spend on films, television, and popular music attest to the importance of "the arts" as entertainment and to the value we place upon even very bad art.

But entertainment is, to a very great extent, a morally and politically neutral quality. We may be entertained by a caricature of Ronald Reagan or a spoof on Jesse Jackson; some people enjoy Jane Austen, while others take their pleasure from the Marquis de Sade. The difference lies in the character and outlook of the readers, and our character and outlook are formed, to some extent, by the books and films and music that we have enjoyed.

The formation of character is a problem that lies at the center of ethics. What is the purpose to a theory of goodness, if it does not provide some account of how people actually become good? Some aspects of our character we inherit as human beings with specific ancestors, but these aptitudes are only the raw materials out of which persons are made, and while we cannot make bricks out of sand—or silk purses out of sows ears—sand can be turned into building blocks, stained glass windows, abrasive sandpaper, or cat litter.

Among the major forces that determine our character—the influences of home and church and friends, for example—I include the arts, even in their crudest and most vulgar forms. "Experience," said Poor Richard, "keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other." But in one very important sense, there is no school but experience in which we learn the greatest lessons of life. We cannot learn how to become decent and unselfish men and women or loyal citizens by memorizing lists of rules or copying the tricks of argument taught by the ancient sophists in Athens and by the modern sophists of the philosophy departments at Harvard and Yale. We learn our moral and social lessons by doing and being done to. Speaking of Aeschylus, it is his lesson of *pathei mathos*, the wisdom that comes from suffering (in its broadest sense).

The heroes of tragedy do not have an easy time of it, imbibing the lessons of experience. Unfortunately, it takes us years to realize the consequences of folly and self-indulgence and decades to discover how to love our neighbors as ourselves. A man with no assistant but his own conscience might take a lifetime in learning the simplest moral truths—so circumscribed are we within the little social spheres we inhabit.

Most of us live within small social groups of a few dozen friends, colleagues, and neighbors who belong to one or two social classes. We can only fall seriously in love once or twice in our lives, and most of us are able to have at best a half-dozen children, to work at one or two professions. We lose a parent only twice. We die once in a lifetime.

In books, however, the whole world is ours. Hamlet may ask of the player, "What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba," but the suffering and vengeful wife of Priam has taught generation after generation something of what it is like to lose everything including your own moral balance.

A writer can pack an entire lifetime into a novel of three to four hundred pages or distill the essence of a love affair into a sonnet. If for most of us everyday life has the power of near beer, then fiction is more like Burgundy or claret, while poetry and music have the strength of cognac or Chartreuse. Perhaps a better metaphor can be drawn from perfume, since it takes thousands upon thousands of petals to produce a single drop of attar of rose. It is only in art that we can live, "breathing concentrated otto, an existence a la Watteau."

But, someone ought to object, the writer only can live one

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life, and some of them write more books (as was said of Livy) than most people read. The truth is that whether a writer writes many novels, like Dickens, or a few, like Flaubert, their best work is usually compressed into three or four really good books. Wordsworth wrote thousands of pages of verse that helped to sink his reputation until Matthew Arnold culled a selection of 317 pages (octavo). At his best a good writer goes deep into the meaning of human experience, and in one lifetime he can only plumb the depths a few times without dying of asphyxiation.

I have been speaking up till now as if all literature were a dialogue between an individual writer making sense of his experience and an individual reader who sees himself reflected in the mirror that the writer has held up to nature. The situation is rarely that simple. Writers, like all of us, are creatures of convention—political conventions, social conventions, aesthetic conventions. They are swayed, as much as the next man, by the rules, platitudes, and proverbs that constitute the trial-and-error wisdom of a people. To understand the mind of a people, study its proverbs. "We count him a wise man," says Selden, "that knows the minds and insides of men, which is done by knowing what is habitual to them. Proverbs are habitual to a Nation, being transmitted from Father to Son."

Rustic people are fond of proverbs, as Aristotle accurately observed, and literature is never so conventional, never so proverbial as it is in its earliest, most folkish stages. Some years ago the late Bruno Bettelheim wrote a book, *The Uses of Enchantment*, in which he defended the educational uses of fairy tales. The tales collected by the Brothers Grimm and other European folklorists are the end result, he argued, of generation after generation of storytellers reworking and refining a story until it conveyed the essence of a human dilemma. Stepparents, for example, always pose a problem for children. Whether the real parent's loss is due to death or divorce, it seems disloyal to accept a stranger in replacement. In early modern Europe, the high rate of women dying in childbirth made the stepmother a near universal source of anxiety for children, and it is by reading such tales as *Hansel and Gretel* that children were able to come to grips with their feelings. In contemporary America, irresponsibility and divorce have taken the place of death, but the problem of stepparents is as serious as it was in the 16th century. Unfortunately, we think we know better than our ancestors, and various stepparent associations have conspired to remove *Hansel and Gretel* from children's schoolbooks. (More recently a group of witches has made a similar demand. What's next, a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Bugeyed Monsters?)

In forming the character of individuals and cultures, literature exerts a more powerful influence than the more formal rules we chant in catechism or civics classes. This is nowhere more evident than in the disparity between the official morality of modern America and the reality of a life that is all too well reflected in popular films. Today, in our schools, we attempt to impart certain values that we believe to be important to our way of life. We say that we want our children to treat others fairly, overlooking distinctions of race, sex, religion, wealth, and even physical appearance.

Looking out over America today, torn by violent animosities of race, sex, class, and creed, it would be hard to maintain that we are succeeding. In many important respects, we treat each other worse than we did in the bad old days of President Buchanan—James, that is. We have given women the right to vote and compete in the marketplace; at the same time we men are walking out on our wives and children at an unprecedented rate, stranding large numbers of young mothers in poverty.

More ominously, the incidence of sexual assault against women, especially on college campuses, is now so high that we treat rape more as an inconvenience than as a capital crime. The Baptist preachers who interceded on behalf of Mike Tyson should have been demanding the death penalty for his crime, not a suspended sentence. For all our public pronouncements on sexual equality and the dignity of women, ours is an age of pornography and exploitation.

We have meted out the same cruel measure of rights to our older citizens, endowing them with rights and pensions while sending them off to retirement villages like so many superannuated elephants we are glad to be rid of. Once a year schoolchildren troop into nursing homes to play grandchildren to the abandoned "seniors" who have real grandchildren somewhere. We have advocacy groups, social workers, and public-interest lawyers, all making a profit out of the misery of old age, but the bottom line is that keeping the elderly alive is costing too much, and the new slogan is "death with dignity."

The early Greeks, who believed in no rights that could not be backed up by the sword, nonetheless revered the wisdom of old age. In the *Iliad*, which is the encapsulation of four centuries of folk memory, Homer portrays the warrior's savage individualism in the starkest terms. Achilles abandons his friends to slaughter, simply because he has been deprived of his honor (in the shape of a concubine) and wishes that all the Greeks and Trojans would kill each other off, leaving the booty to himself and his friend Patroclus. When Patroclus is killed by Hector, Achilles is not content with killing his enemy but insists upon dragging his body, day after day, around the walls of Troy. Finally Hector's aged father, Priam, makes his way by night to the Greek camp in order to plead with Achilles for his son's body. The old man's method of argument is highly instructive. Does he dazzle his enemy with an array of logical arguments or appeals to natural law or citations of precedents? No, after offering the customary ransom, he says:

> "Have respect for the gods, Achilles, and pity him, bringing to mind your own father. For I am far more wretched and have suffered what no mortal man has ever suffered—to reach my hand out in supplication to the face of the man who killed my child." So he spoke and stirred up a longing in Achilles to lament his father.

The spectacle of Priam's suffering causes Achilles to reflect upon his own father and to put himself and his own family in the position of Hector and his. Until now Achilles has been more than human in his prowess and in his rage, but through empathy he learns to be merely human, not by reasoning but by experiencing, by empathizing. We, sharing in the experience, learn the same lesson. This, perhaps, is what is meant by a humane education.

Vergil, in a brilliant passage of the *Aeneid*, appears to draw the same conclusion. Aeneas and his band of defeated Trojans, after years of unhappy wanderings, are driven by a storm to the North African coast. Separated from the main body of their comrades, Aeneas and a few friends make their way to

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Carthage, where they see a temple of Juno under construction. The sculptural ornaments of the temple turn out to be scenes from the Trojan War. "What place," Aeneas asks his friend, "what part of the world is not full of our suffering? Behold Priam. Here there are the rewards due his merit. The things men do draw tears, and touch the mind with thoughts of death."

Art—in this case sculpture—has caught the moral drama of the war and touched the hearts of the alien Phoenicians who are settling Carthage, and when Aeneas meets the queen of the city, she tells him that her own suffering has made her more receptive to the Trojans' plight: "Acquainted with grief, I am learning how to help the unfortunate." What allows her to learn this trick of connecting her own suffering with that of the Trojans? Art. Queen Dido, from her own experience and from seeing and hearing the tale of Troy, has discovered a common humanity that unites Greeks, Trojans, and Phoenicians.

In considering these passages of Homer and Vergil, we come close to the heart of the ancient view of literature. In the *Poetics* Aristotle was only summing up and sharpening the edge of commonplace Greek opinions. All art is *mimesis*, that is, mimicry or impersonation. "Mimicry grows up in human beings from their childhood, and man differs from other beasts in this, that he is the most imitative of creatures, and through mimicry he learns his first lessons; there is also the fact that everyone takes pleasure in [regarding] imitations. . . . The very things that we view with pain [when they really happen], the images of these things, when accurately represented, we take pleasure in watching." Aristotle's reason for the pleasure of secondhand pain is that men by nature desire to learn and that we take pleasure in recognizing the original of a likeness.

There is, perhaps, a bit more to it than simple recognition. After the great storm, when Aeneas' fortunes are at their lowest ebb, he tells his comrades: "Perhaps some day we shall enjoy recollecting even this." Memory is the most basic of the arts; Mnemosyne is the mother of the Muses, in part because the epic poets claimed to be representing the events of history as they really happened.

The pleasure of poetry lies in the recollection and recreation of past experiences, including the experiences of the dead. Although they certainly claimed to be accurate, the poets have always lied, as Plato and Nietzsche complained. But we all lie in our memories, remembering the days of our youth as more golden (or blacker) than they were, recollecting the impossible beauty of our first loves, or even recounting the stories of Mallarmean fish that are larger and lovelier for getting away. Every day of our lives we "lend artistic verisimilitude to a bald and otherwise unconvincing narrative," and he is an artist who can "summon up a remembrance of things past."

Most of us do not get much beyond memory and rely upon the stories of novelists, poets, and filmmakers as the scenarios of our own moral narratives. Like the projectionist in Keaton's *Sherlock, Jr.* who falls asleep watching the film, we step into the picture and become a participant in the action. When Robert Coles began studying the moral life of poor Southern children, he was at first annoyed by the omnipresence of television in their homes and by the children's habit of referring to movies instead of to their own lives: "I wanted to hear more about what was *actually* happening to the child. My training had taught that a cartoon or a movie essentially underlined or amplified an existing psychological reality. . . ." As his work progressed, Coles began to realize the value of films as vehicles for expressing and exploring the moral beliefs of the children and adults he was interviewing. After discussing a young segregationist's views in connection with *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, Coles concluded:

> Perhaps the word imagination is . . . the one required to do some justice to us moviegoers: moral imagination as it is lent energy by that inert celluloid going round and round for a hundred minutes or so. . . . then the mind recovers the remembered words, the scenes that engage with a person's own scene, his or her life-situation.

None of the films used by Coles were overt propaganda; indeed, nothing so spoils a work of fiction as the author's sermonizing or, worse, his attempt to be his own literary critic and interpret the meaning of his story. The intellectual novelist, if he is any good, must be constantly on guard against the temptation to explain away his story.

Intellectuals rarely do make good novelists, because the process of creating a story is not primarily an intellectual task. Anthony Trollope was a very unlikely candidate for literary eminence. He was grubby and untidy as a child, a poor student who only occasionally ascended to the heights of mediocrity. As a young employee of the British postal system, he was neither punctual nor disciplined, and like Johnny Eames, the hero of *The Small House at Allington*, it took him longer than most "hobbledehoys" to find himself.

As for his intellect, it was hardly any better than that of John Eames who could never manage to read Greek. His opinions were, for the most part, the utterly conventional views of a moderately liberal defender of the imperial status quo, and since he could not argue he generally attempted to win his point by outshouting his opponents. And yet, and yet, there is no novelist who gives us a deeper or wiser glimpse of human nature in all its varieties.

How can this be? How can a completely ordinary man, one is tempted to say dullard, succeed in a genre where much brighter men (e.g., Edmund Wilson and Henry Adams and George Santayana) made fools of themselves? The explanation lies in Trollope's lifelong habit of reverie. Like many hobbledehoys, young Anthony found the world of his imagination more comfortable than the harsh jungle of Winchester College:

> I was always going about with some castle in the air firmly built in my own mind. . . . For weeks, for months . . . from year to year, I would carry on the same tale. I learned in this way to maintain an interest in a fictitious story, to dwell on a work created by my own imagination, and to live in a world altogether outside the world of my own material life.

In Trollope's view, the effect of literature upon the reader is its appeal to the imagination. To succeed in making his readers "so intimately acquainted with his characters that the creations of his brain should be to them speaking, moving, living creatures," the novelist must "know those fictitious personages himself." His characters must "be with him as he lies down to sleep, and as he wakes from his dreams. He must

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learn to hate them and to love them. He must argue with them, quarrel with them, forgive them, and even submit to them."

To submit to one's own creations is not a rational or considered act. It cannot be part of a plan or serve an ideological purpose. When Trollope tries to make a point openly, as he does in *The Warden*, he lapses into satire and caricature, but when he is content to marshal the troops of his imagination, the reader can sympathize with his most repellent characters.

Trollope could never bring himself to like Dickens, precisely because his heroes and villains are such extreme cases. We hate the Dickensian demons and wish them dead for being so beastly to Oliver Twist and Little Nell, but Trollope's villains we can dislike in the same way that we dislike the enemies we cross swords with at the office or on the vestry, and if, for a moment, we can put ourselves in Bishop Proudie's shoes, we may learn not to demonize the officious little humbugs who rule our world.

Trollope was fortunate in not being too bright; he had to trust instincts more basic than reason. Whatever an artist might believe about his work, he is inevitably making sense of the materials furnished to him by his deceitful memory, and in making sense he turns pain into pleasure. In our own lives, we sometimes do painful things, like attending a high-school reunion or arranging one last meeting after the end of an affair, simply to round off the experience or suck some bitter lesson out of it. We read on to the end of Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, not because we imagine things will turn out well (although even the most cynical reader can scarcely anticipate the conclusion), but because we need to know. The greatest fictions—whether tragedy, epic, or novels—are tales of detection. Is Orestes responsible for his mother's death? Who killed Laius? Some years ago, the question of who shot J. R. seemed to occupy half the world for an entire summer.

In their own lives, men and women—burdened, as they are, with the grave responsibility of living from day-to-day—have little time for reverie and nostalgia. Trollope could afford to obsess himself with his characters, because like a good Victorian he had learned how to make a business out of his weakness. If there is a writer who did manage finally to submerge himself entirely into the pool of his own remembering, it is Proust. From the first page of his masterpiece, he draws the reader into the hypnotic realm that lies between sleeping and waking. When an accidental taste of tea and cake opens the gates to the past, he sets about telling the story of his uneventful life, which is really the story of the writing of the novel. Near the end, when Marcel has realized that he only exists to write this novel, he reflects upon his possible readers:

> Ils ne seraient pas, selon moi, mes lecteurs, mais les propres lecteurs d'eux-mêmes, mon livre n'étant qu'une sorte de ces verres grossisant. . . . Mon livre, grâce auquel je leur fournirais le moyen de lire en eux-mêmes.

His novel was to be a magnifying glass, a book that readers could use as a means of reading in their own selves.

Somewhere in his table talk, Coleridge praises Claudian as a writer who displays the transition from the objective poetry of the ancient world to the subjectivity of modern literature. It is easy to find exceptions to Coleridge's distinction, but whether one chooses Claudian or some other writer as the point of departure, Christian literature has, in fact, tended to illuminate the inner reality of conscious life more than it has shed light on the outer world of rocks and trees and other people. One could trace a line from St. Augustine's *Confessions* through *Pilgrim's Progress* to the poetry of the Romantics (Coleridge, in particular, but also Lamartine and Musset) to *A la recherche du temps perdu*.

Unlike so many modern masters, Proust was, although reactionary, not a Christian reactionary, but like Joyce and Faulkner, Eliot and Pound, he insisted upon the integrity of the inner life. The bourgeois order of the *fin de siècle* was already a fragmented world, exalting division of labor in the factory, demarcating the separate spheres of the sexes, deepening the cleavage between public and private life, work and home, business and hobbies. It was the golden age of hobbies, when men who had made or inherited their bundle could find nothing better to occupy themselves with than model railroads and golf.

"And so I entered the broken world," sang the drunken son of an Ohio candy manufacturer, "to trace the visionary company of love." If Christendom lay shattered in fragments by the end of the First World War, there were plenty of king's horses and king's men eager to put it back together again: Communists, Nazis, democrats, at the same time as they were driving wedges into the fissures, they were also patching the pieces together into ideological nations whose only cement was obedience to the party state. Reactionary Christians—Eliot and Péguy, for example—repudiated the deconstruction of experience represented by the bourgeois order, but they also opposed the attempts of Lenin, Hitler, and Roosevelt to reconstruct unity within the total state.

The best modern poems and novels—like all good poems and novels—are deeply subversive, because the moment we first glimpse the integrity of conscious experience as represented by a coherent narrative, we begin to discover that our own lives have their own integrity, their own worth, quite apart from the money we get and spend and pay in taxes. A man who can tell the story of his own life can never be fully a slave. That is why early Christians were so active in preaching the gospel and comparatively indifferent to reforming society. It also explains why the faithless clergy of these latter days have reversed the priorities.

The Christian faith is not so much a matter of doctrine or even of ritual as it is of experience: the experience of conversion and prayer, the experiences of the church to which we give the name tradition. The Gospels are nothing, if they are not the stories of a life, and Christians draw nearer to God by contemplating that life, by reading ourselves into the story, and ultimately by practicing an imitation of Christ.

If there were races of rational beings that think analytically and tell no stories, we and they would have nothing to say to each other. All our wisdom, all science is an account of how the world got to be the way it is. *Genesis* and Hesiod's *Theogony*, the Big Bang theory and *The Origin of Species* are all stories used to justify the ways of God to man. "I love to tell the story," the old song goes, "of Jesus and his glory." As human beings we are condemned to a lifetime of storytelling, and as the heirs of a long civilization, whose record constitutes the longest of all stories, we are obliged to pass on these stories to the little savages we rear in our houses and indoctrinate in our schools. That, quite simply, is what literature is good for. ◇

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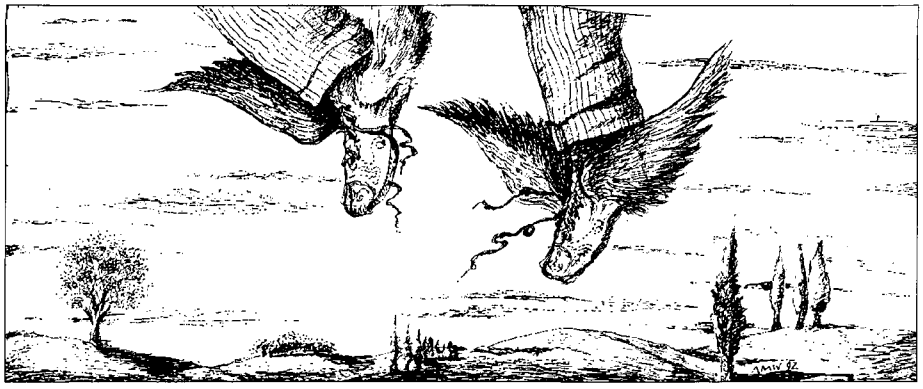
Céline and French Reactionary Modernism

by Thomas Molnar



Reactionary literature in France today—as opposed to earlier varieties, for example the romantic, two centuries ago—is distinguished by its despair, its radical style, its exploration of new worlds, its almost science-fiction approach to life and letters. Its most powerful motive is unquestionably despair: of democratic vulgarity, the machine civilization, the social monotony that spreads over the happily consumerist landscape. What is unusual with modern literary reactionaries is that they no longer claim an aristocratic taste, feelings not shared by the masses, or membership in a Proustian milieu for refined intellectual and emotional palates. Spengler and Ortega are not their patron saints. On the contrary, their antimodern attitude expresses itself in a radical, at times populist style, similar to that of leftist protesters, at times to a Surrealist provocation. As a general explanation, I offer a statement by François Huguenin, young editor of the recently launched magazine *Réaction*: "We are in a paradoxical situation: life under a regime [the liberal-socialist of France] claiming total freedom of thought, yet enforcing an ironclad ideology at all levels, schools, media, culture, consumerism. This imposed uniformity is such that we are not even permitted to be curious."

Such sentiments were essential to the works of Céline, and help explain why Céline is today number one on the French literary horizon, although he died a generation ago and even then belonged to the prewar firmament. Céline was all the things that the *république des lettres* repudiated and detested: antidemocrat, antibourgeois, antimilitary, antiwar, anti-Semite. From 1932 when he broke into the limelight until his death in 1961, he claimed for himself the status both as whip and whipping boy, truth-sayer and martyr, and as a writer who was superior to Proust and Gide, his refined but easily moth-eaten older contemporaries. Céline's was the generation of Georges Bernanos, the filmmaker Marcel Pagnol, the Provençal Jean Giono, the pagan/Roman Montherlant, and the satirist Marcel Aymé—a mixed bag: Bernanos was militantly Catholic; Montherlant classically Roman; Giono and Pagnol, coming from France's south (*le midi*), were calmly but relentlessly traditionalist, enemies of industrial society (there being no consumer society yet).

Some of these men, Montherlant and Pagnol, became in due time members of the Académie Française, the others won prestigious literary prizes. In other words, even in the eyes of the progressive establishment, they were by no means outcasts, and even Céline was an important prizewinner, with novels published by Gallimard. They were the right wing of the literary establishment, and their defiance of the left wing may be best captured with the vitriolic label attached by Céline to Sartre: "A worm wriggling in a test tube." (In French it is shorter and more deadly, considering Sartre's gnome-like appearance: *"l'agité du bocal"*).

In spite of his numerous handicaps—the already mentioned anti-this, anti-that—Céline, the exiled (who for a decade after 1945 was not allowed to return from a Danish exile), has now: a) a place in Gallimard's Pléiade collection, next to all-time classics; b) been imitated by an entire generation for his bitter, mordant style; and c) had his works recognized as best-sellers, although the purity and inventiveness of his language, qualities rarely seen together, is a monument to the French literary *esprit*. Céline's influence is such that even his violent anti-Semitism has not, in the end, harmed him; his spectacular character defects have been forgiven, and he is acknowledged as the anti-Sartre, the stylistic model for dozens of Young Turks in French letters, the so-called "hussars" for whom he had a particular tenderness: Michel Déon, Roger Nimier, Antoine Blondin, Jacques Laurent, Michel Mohrt, Jean Raspail, and others. These names, and that of Céline himself, are practically unknown to the American reader who is kept at a safe distance by publishers. Yet this literature exists, and it has been the only lively and active one because "the other side" offers only sex, psychoanalysis, and ideology, and legions of intellectuals sharing their time among the three.

What is the secret of Céline's attractiveness? His *Journey to the End of the Night*, today a classic of modernity, combines desperate pessimism *and* a loud "yes" to life, iconoclasm, adventure, the mocking of the individual as a nonentity, and a strangled cry over the fate of the little man. The novel (or is

Thomas Molnar's latest book is The Church, Pilgrim of Centuries *(Eerdmans).*

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it a memoir? a pamphlet? a lament over the century?) is a lyrical yet never sentimental tableau of the human condition; it is perhaps significant that its publication coincided with Malraux's ultrapoliticized thus ephemeral *La condition humaine*. Malraux, however, was an intellectual infected with the century's utopia, revolution, and illusion-chasing, while Céline talks about real people: the tired waitress who has an illegitimate child and who accommodates the sex demands of Arab clients; the low-ranking colonial official who kicks the pants of Africans since they are inferior even to him; the stowaway in New York who watches from a park bench the unattainable secretaries and their false glitter; the doctor in the *banlieues* of Paris to whom wretched neighbors bring their physical and moral abjection. (In real life, Céline was Dr. Louis-Ferdinand Destouches, a physician in a popular *quartier*.)

What is modern and reactionary in this? The fusion of the smell and taste of real life with the robust argot of the people, the discovery that bourgeois "values" are a facade for the misery that people drag behind them; the organic tie, good and bad, between people in no need of an ideology to tell the difference; and, in France, the stamp of modernity and reaction was the language that Céline used, not that of *agrégés* but of high and low classes, shopkeepers and countesses, of people like Marius, César, and Fanny in Pagnol's movies, and their immortal common sense, cries, and laughter. Asked what good French was, 17th-century grammarian Vaugelas answered that it was Versailles-vocabulary daily nourished by the down-to-earth speech of crate-carriers from Les Halles, the busy market of Paris. Céline could masterfully use this refined and earthy tongue, adjust to the humor, the savor, the cynicism, the street-level tragedies, without ever becoming vulgar, cynical, or ungrammatical. The way his contemporary, Bernanos, fashioned and accredited the speech of saints from the everyday, Céline recreated the language of the *quartier*, of the *concierge*: never offensive, always genuine, carrying in its current the bistro's smell and the housewives' gossip. This, mind you, at a time when it was fashionable to invent the pseudopoor, the pseudoworker, the whole salon-proletariat, symptoms of bourgeois self-flagellation.

Without the German occupation, Céline's modernism and reactionary writing would have had an uninterrupted influence deep into the postwar decades. As it turned out, reaction was outlawed, and modernism was taken over by the left. How could a right-wing writer, with fascist or Vichyist sympathies, be anything but a decrepit defender of all *anciens régimes*? How could he have a popular style, not dictated by Moscow's interests and by socialist realism? The new affirmation was that one could be a great writer *and* a right-winger, partly because *la droite* was free, its writers did not protect little sinecures, ministerial posts, reputations made by visits to Havana, Peking, and various peace-congresses; partly because leftist writers became the new Establishment, ex-rebel Malraux becoming de Gaulle's minister of culture and Sartre a wealthy bourgeois.

The turning point came in 1968, on the streets of Paris where the newest new class, the students, proved to be but conditionally leftists, since they incorporated a series of rightist demands and watchwords in their manifestos. *L'imagination au pouvoir* was, after all, nowhere to be found in the Marxian corpus. A typical illustration of the turnaround was the life of Regis Debray, Che Guevara's companion in the Bolivian adventure. When Debray was released after a half-dozen years in the jungle-jail, he became the closest thing allowable to a social-nationalist, although he soon started serving in Mitterrand's entourage. From playboy to jungle fighter to nationalist pamphleteer, ready to take a role in a Céline novel! In other words, after 1968, things loosened up. Céline, Bernanos, Montherlant, Anouilh, Kléber Haedens, Giono, and Aymé became first grudgingly accepted, then the dominant influence in literature, theater, and thought—and all were pureblood reactionaries. Their style, unencumbered by slogans—style is man himself, said Buffon—showed none of the marmoreal qualities of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* generation of Proust and Gide. It was not studded by nationalist slogans as the novels of Barrès, and it tore with hungry teeth into the language of reality. While Céline himself was consecrated by publisher Gaston Gallimard (Céline set his own royalties and number of copies printed), a phalanx of young writers took his succession. Their identification card was stamped with the following credentials: they took life, war, and peace in both hands, lived the tragic carnage of Indonesia and Algeria, became writer-mercenaries in Angola, and wept over lost comrades and the lost empire at Dien Bien Phu. They were heavily political, in fact violently opposed to de Gaulle and his lies and treachery; they were jailed, censored, forced into exile—but always remained true to literature. In short, they lived Célinian lives, taking risks, mixing brutality and tenderness; they cynically dismissed causes, and were ready to die for them.

Today, in the exceptionally shallow years of Giscard's and Mitterrand's liberal-socialist-consumerist republic, the universal boredom announced by Fukuyama is compelled to make a little place for the only worthwhile literature still tolerated. Since nothing happens in Mitterrandia, except elections, invectives, and corruption (come to think of it, this describes not France alone), the novelist is led once again to the exploration of the imaginary. Is Jean Raspail the closest in succession to Céline? Hard to say since the latter was a force of nature and a chameleon, at home in bistros and on African slave ships—imagine a Joseph Conrad with a roaring humor—armed with a style that makes you cry and laugh after innumerable rereadings.

Raspail, on the other hand, combines the plasticity of the moviemaker and the daring, rare today, of the explorer of ancient/new lands and legends. His *Camp of the Saints* has, however, Célinian dimensions as it relates the pouring of millions of wretched Hindus into France, unresisted by cowardly drawing-room humanists until the invaders take over, first the Provence, then Paris—in the name, one assumes, of human rights. It is a rich and hilarious drama, aching to be filmed, if filmmakers were not cowards. Raspail's literature leaves France for the pampas of Patagonia, the high seas, half-imaginary kingdoms, the last breath of freedom in a world closing in on us with unsmiling GNPs, national debt, and "no smoking" signs. In the steps of Raspail, Dominique de Roux, and Jacques Laurent one sees traces of Céline's winged boots. While Sartre has become illegibly passé, predictable, and boring—except, of course, to the professional leftist mourners—Maurice Clavel is the new (posthumous) hero of the post-1968 crowd that fused left and right with a reactionary message. Maurice Clavel fired their imaginations, since he too combined leftist indignation with Catholic orthodoxy, and denounced derelict bishops in the wake of Vatican II.

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In short, the domination of leftism in postwar literature is broken, although the agony and the burial took an inordinately long time. The media are still ruled by the Marxist epigones, the recycled liberal-democrats, the conformist little bureaucrats ready to cash in on any regime's handouts. With an admirably executed about-face, they now turn not to Moscow but to Washington, from where invitations and checks are expected. From Kremlin to White House, Gorbachev-style. But talent can only be found on the right. I speak here of literature, not of essays, pamphlets, scholarship, historiography, sociopolitical analysis—fields today, at long last, unclassifiable as to ideological commitment. From war's end to the mid-70's—the date of Solzhenitsyn's still well-remembered Parisian visit and television debate—the period was leftist/bourgeois, utopian, and unoriginal. Since then, France has witnessed a reactionary renaissance, and books hidden under the veil of hypocrisy have found the channels of public acclaim. Ideology slowly yielded to life—at whose description Céline, Anouilh, Rebatet, and Aymé were masters. Modernity came finally to mean not communist Aragon's and feminist Beauvoir's mind-killing volumes, or the *nouveau roman*, empty of characters and peopled by geometrical descriptions, or ideological elucubrations, but immersion in life and, above all, in a style, a language. The message was clear to those able to read: the way of writing, of approaching things, must convey the way of living. The latter was no longer to be confined to alcoves, protest marches, and the signing of pro-Mao manifestos. "Reaction" became an act of living. As Bernanos once wrote: "Of course I am a reactionary! Only a corpse does not react—but then it is covered with worms!"

The word "reactionary," less familiar to the reader, at least in its literary use, than "modern," should acquire meaning when put in the context of time. The great schools of romanticism, realism, and naturalism raised the novel to its highest achievement, but in the last half-century the genre has declined and has been in search of a philosophical base in which it could make sense once again, in which the term *story* can be appreciated. But we have been living in an overly analytical age, with dozens of theories and labyrinthine detours—Freudian, semiotic, structuralist, deconstructionist—all flying around us like airplanes out of control. As in modernist exhibits of art, we no longer know "what is what"; titles, contents, and shapes offer no clues; words abolish each other.

Let us call it an absence of meaning, perhaps a deliberate one. It is, at any rate, a cult of the subjective, an exclusivist cerebration, a series of game theories. The "reactionary" act in literature (and art) is then the *restoration of meaning*, hence of objects, images, people, and of their relationships, passions, fears, and hopes. Reactionary literature is not today not something simplistic, rudimentary, fearful of verbal risks; it is a turn to the "story" of the literary text, the rooting of characters in the world common to the reader and writer. "Reactionary" literature was the novels of Thackeray and Balzac, Hamsun and Tolstoy and Chekhov, the plays of Ibsen and Shaw, although they did not bear this label, since there was no vast, victorious, and dominant counter-novel, counter-drama. And it is untrue that their public was as puzzled by their novelties as today's public is: it merely had to adjust, as publics before them, to a new style, plot, and characters. There was no need for professors of semantics to explain what it was all about, while their academic rivals prepared a counter-explanation that was just as farfetched.

Why were Flaubert and Dostoyevsky reactionaries? Because they worked with the assumption that literary creation is not a mere system of signs, that people understand other people, and that the modern reader knows what Homer or Sophocles were also writing about: human beings. Solzhenitsyn, too, is a reactionary: sabotaging the ukase to write about idealized tractor drivers, he fashioned flesh-and-blood Ivan Denisovitches. What would we readers gain by knowing (gratuitously guessing) Ivan's dreams, Oliver Twist's castration complex, Aliosha's sublimated envy of Ivan or vice versa?

Modern reaction in literature is thus the talent and the courage to write again on the human level, a return from piled-up theories and layers of the sub-, un-, and proto-conscious. Only the mediocre writer allows language and grammar to dictate his text. The reactionary novelist is aware that after a never-ending apprenticeship he is master of the word, that he and his characters forever mingle in inspiration. <©>

His 'Life'

by Richard Moore

Quip upon quip
in "smarty ass" one-upmanship
until our clown
experienced death's clever put-down.

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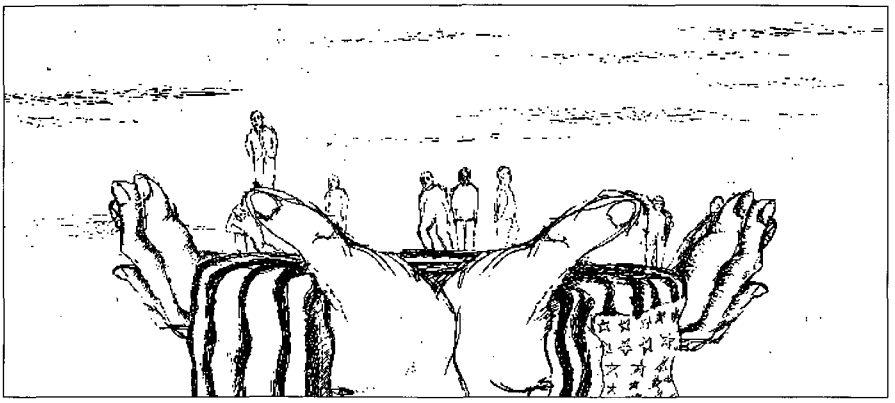
Robert Frost

Social and Political Conservative

by Peter J. Stanlis



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Between 1913 and 1962 Robert Frost published 11 books of poetry, won four Pulitzer Prizes, established himself as the unofficial poet laureate of the United States, and acquired a national and international literary reputation. Despite his fame as a poet and public speaker, and because of his friendship with such liberal Democrats as Vice-President Henry Wallace and President John F. Kennedy, few Americans are aware that in his social and political philosophy Frost was a highly original conservative thinker. His thought was wholly unsystematic, and lacked the coherence and unity of the abstract systems of speculative philosophers, but it was wholly consistent in adhering to basic social and political conservative principles.

Frost distrusted abstract labels and categories, because he knew that such terms as "revolutionary," "radical," "liberal," "rebel," and "conservative" often provided the basis for ideological theories and rational systems created by the imagination and then identified with "reality." Like Edmund Burke, the poet considered ideology a fictional product of the creative imagination, often utilized as a substitute for revealed religion and historical experience, and the chief source of the delusions that led men to dream that they could establish a Utopian social order. The ideologies of such writers as Rousseau and Marx had no place in Frost's social and political philosophy. In avoiding abstract categories, Frost never referred to himself as a conservative, because he feared that other people's false conceptions of this term would be attributed to him. Two lines summed up his viewpoint on such abstract categories:

> I never dared be radical when young
> For fear it would make me conservative when old.

These lines express Frost's characteristic prudent temperament and moderation between political extremes; he avoided intellectual disillusionments by refusing initially to commit himself to ideological illusions.

Frost's social and political conservatism was part of his total dualistic philosophy, which assumed that "reality" consisted of two basic elements—matter and spirit, each complex in itself, but made doubly so by their constant and unresolved interactions. He stated that the universe consists of "endless . . . things in pairs ordained to everlasting opposition," and that "the philosopher values himself on the inconsistencies he can contain by main force. They are two ends of a strut that keeps his mind from collapsing." In resolving the dualistic conflict between the one and the many in matter and spirit, Frost believed that all human endeavors sought to reconcile and unify the complexities, paradoxes, ambiguities, and contradictions in man's experience through greater knowledge, understanding, revealed insight, and wisdom. Frost's philosophical dualism drew heavily on the thought of Aristotle and Kant, and was further indebted in many of its complexities and elaborations to the metaphorical language of Emerson, and the work of William James, Henri Bergson, and Alfred North Whitehead, among others.

Frost rejected as too simple and optimistic the spiritual monism of Ralph Waldo Emerson, which explained the problem of evil as merely the absence of good as the sole reality. He also rejected the materialistic monism of Karl Marx, which treated spirit as an illusion and ended in doctrinaire atheism. To Frost human nature itself was a dualistic compound of matter and spirit, or body and soul. He viewed religion, philosophy, science, art, education, politics, and the unfolding history of mankind in organized society as different forms of revelation, perceived by the human mind as metaphors that illuminated what is true, good, and beautiful in life.

Although Frost did not belong to any church, he identified himself as "an Old Testament Christian," in the tradition of St. Augustine. He once stated that he was "less churchy" than T. S. Eliot, but "more religious." He despised religiosity, but he stated that he had "no religious doubts, not about God's existence." His whole object in his poetry, he said, was "to say spirit in terms of matter or matter in terms of spirit," so that his major poems are emotionally charged with a profound piety. He believed certain mysteries always remain, and therefore "something has to be left to God." Contrary to the claims of Joseph Warren Beach, Lawrance Thompson, George W. Nitchie, Marion Montgomery, and Yvor Winters, Frost was not a spiritually alienated man, an indecisive agnostic or "spiritual drifter." These critics fail to understand the dividing line between being noncommittal and uncommitted.

Peter J. Stanlis's most recent book is Edmund Burke: The Enlightenment and Revolution, *published by Transaction.*

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In accepting the moral law of Moses in the Decalogue, Frost made justice paramount to mercy both between God and man and for man in civil society. This meant that in his social and political philosophy he resolved the conflicts in what he called "the justice-mercy contradiction" in favor of justice. Mercy had an important place in his philosophy, but it was subordinated to justice. From this position Frost was highly critical of socialists and liberals and those he dubbed "New Testament sapheads," Christians who sentimentalized Christ's Sermon on the Mount and made mercy supreme over justice, not only in religion, through belief in universal salvation, but in every aspect of man's secular life through politics and in society. To Frost such Christians were really Rousseauists and did not know it. They believed in the natural goodness of man, ignored original sin, and under the impact of the ever-increasing secularization of modern life they invariably became sentimental humanitarians in their social and political beliefs and actions.

Like Aristotle in *The Politics* and like Edmund Burke throughout his political philosophy, Frost assumed that man is by his innate nature a social animal. Unlike Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Marx, who assumed that organized civil society is "artificial," Frost believed that life in society is "natural," and therefore the normal state of human existence. Frost was not a primitivist, and he never made an antithesis between "nature" and society. The membership of persons in civil society was to him not a matter of personal choice or arbitrary will, not a voluntary and revocable contractual relationship, but rather a biological and moral necessity and the result of a complex and extended historical inheritance. Men are born into their society without their consent, and the essential elements in their continued relationships with the basic institutions and laws of organized society are also beyond voluntary choices.

Frost was certainly aware of the great importance of the ancient Greco-Roman classical civilization and the Judeo-Christian religious tradition in forming Western society and culture, including American society. He even traced the American commitment to democratic government back to ancient Athens:

> Ours is a very ancient political growth, beginning at one end of the Mediterranean Sea, and coming westward—tried in Athens, tried in Italy, tried in England, tried in France, coming westward all the way to us. A very long growth, a growth through trial and error. . . . Put a marker where the growth begins, at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, and there's never been a glimmer of democracy south of there.

But unlike the religious and aristocratic European-based conservatism of T. S. Eliot and other literary traditionalists, Frost's social and political conservatism was derived directly from his reverence for the American Republic and its Constitution. He refined upon Aristotle and Burke's principle that civil society is "natural" by adding his own original and distinctly American belief in individual personal liberty. His poetry and prose expresses a characteristically American sensibility, a conservative synthesis of faith in individuals and people at large with a belief in self-government under constitutional law and limited power in government.

In society the constant problem was how to resolve the ambiguity between the necessary claims of institutions upon individuals, for duties to be performed, and the conflicting claims of each person to be as free and independent as possible within social customs and laws. Wherever moral or legal authority external to the individual existed, this perpetual ambiguity needed to be resolved. Frost believed there was always some uncertainty regarding each individual's membership in the institutional life of his community. The claims of personal self-interest and social benevolence were subject to perpetual adjustments, but since living together in society was "natural," some final identity of interests between individuals and institutions required that men work together "whether they work together or apart." The great aim of politics was to transcend conflicts between individuals and classes by reconciling their differences and achieving harmony. In the conflicts between political means and social ends, the great and final objective to Frost was to preserve the maximum freedom of each individual from the arbitrary or unconstitutional power of the state.

Frost perceived that a great loss in individual freedom in American society was the result of the serious imbalance that had developed by the early 20th century between rural and urban life, with more and more people living in metropolitan centers. The poet called himself "very much a country man," and did not like to see the city pitted against the country, since both were valuable aspects of civil society and supplemented each other. But an urbanized economy rests largely upon the researches of science, inventions, the interdependence of technology, assembly-line industrialization, the division of labor, credit, monetary exchange, commerce and finance, and these create a depersonalized society that destroys community life and makes economic and personal freedom depend more and more upon government, rather than upon the self-reliance fostered by rural life. For a socially healthy America, Frost contended, "What we want is the largest possible number of citizens who can take care of themselves. What we need is character." To Frost there was no question that the greatest degree of self-reliance, love of freedom, reflective leisure, and integrity of character is found in rural life. The need of being versed in country things is one of the grand themes in Frost's poetry. Country life is not an escape from the demands of urban society, as some critics of Frost claimed, but a way of developing the intellectual, moral, aesthetic, and social capability of free individuals. There is nothing antisocial or anarchical in Frost's ideal of self-reliant individualism. The unrestrained growth of industrialism, and the constant shift from rural living to urban life, and the urbanization of rural life itself, was to Frost one of the great social tragedies of 20th-century America.

The poet's strong emphasis upon rural life included a sense of local community as necessary for a healthy civic order. He believed that the social and political freedom of Americans depended upon "the land," conceived as the cultural and constitutionally incorporated geographical area lying between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and between Canada and Mexico: "What gives us our freedom is having a territorial basis, belonging to the land." The legally incorporated land that constituted the United States did not so much belong to the American people as they belonged to the land. Frost's conception of the United States as a nation was that it was a territorial democracy, not merely a democracy based upon pop-

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ulation or the will of a numerical majority. It followed that there was no such thing as "the people" apart from its geographical-cultural-legal-political character. A nation is more than merely numbers of individuals counted by the head and living within a geographical area. As a nation the "people" is the product of its total historical inheritance, which gives it a unique social character. The unwritten constitution of the American people was in its total social inheritance, which to Frost was even more important than its written legal and political Constitution.

Frost was well aware that there are serious weaknesses in all forms of government, including democracy. But he loved and preferred "the liberal ease of democracy," because "democracy with all its faults is the world's best bet till the people's virtue all leaches out of them." He distinguished between the French revolutionary Jacobin type of "democracy" and the American constitutional democracy of representative republican government. The French democracy was essentially egalitarian and leveled out all individual and class differences; American democracy was centered in liberty, not in equality, and placed strong limitations on the legal and political power of the state, through divided and balanced powers between the states and the federal government, in order to provide the maximum freedom to persons and local authorities. Frost rejected the egalitarian theory of popular absolute sovereignty, with its modern slogan "one man, one vote." When Carl Sandburg published what Frost called his "New Deal-Fair Deal" propaganda poem, "The People, Yes," Frost responded that his view of American democracy would say "The People, yes, and the People, no." His faith in the people under democratic government included an awareness of their weaknesses as well as their strengths and virtues. He rejected popular sovereignty based only upon numbers in favor of a corporate conception of sovereignty and representation, which included the original constitutional federalism of the Founding Fathers, with strictly defined limitations on federal power; territorial democracy for election to the federal Senate; population for election to the lower House; and the electoral college for election of the President.

Frost identified his party politics by calling himself, at various times, "a Madisonian-Washingtonian-Jeffersonian Democrat," or "a Grover Cleveland Democrat," or "an Old Line Democrat." What kind of Democrat was Frost? In his poem "Build Soil—A Political Pastoral," the chief character clearly speaks for the poet:

> I was brought up
> A state-rights free-trade Democrat. What's that?
> An inconsistency.

Once when Frost was accused by a New Deal Democrat of being politically inconsistent or "mixed-up," he replied: "No, I'm not mixed up, I'm well mixed." He noted that the political mixture in his party politics began at birth, when he was named after the Confederate general, Robert Lee Frost. He added: "You know, I inherited my status as a State-rights Democrat from my father—maybe my grandfather. I've never outgrown it." Whether mixed-up or well mixed, Frost certainly was one of the most original and unstereotyped Democrats that the Democratic Party ever had.

The wide-ranging class and nationality groups that comprised the Democratic Party certainly suited the poet's intense individualism. As a party man Frost was very much like Will Rogers, who once quipped: "I'm a Democrat. I don't belong to any organized party." Similarly, Frost once said: "Being a Democrat is like being a woman; you can always change your mind." He then added: "There are more different ways of being a Democrat than of being a Republican." Frost made this remark in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to a middle-aged couple, conservative, Republican, Harvard friends, after the husband had expressed his amazement that Frost identified himself as a Democrat. The wife had listened intently to the poet's statement, and then responded vehemently: "You're right, Mr. Frost, there's only one kind of Republican," pointing to her husband, "and there he sits!" Frost enjoyed telling this story to a group of the faculty at the Bread Loaf School of English in Vermont, during the summer of 1961, in the presence of Donald Davidson, a Southern Jeffersonian Democrat. Davidson then asked Frost: "What kind of Democrat are you? Democrat with a capital 'D,' or with a lower case 'd'?" Frost answered: "I'm a G-D Democrat." The "G-D," he went on to say, stood for "Godawful-Disgruntled," and that he had been a "G-D" Democrat since 1896, when Grover Cleveland's second term of office ended.

From the time of Woodrow Wilson until his death in 1963, Frost continued to despair of the Democratic Party much as a father might despair of a wayward child. He believed that beginning with Wilson the Democratic Party in particular and the modern world in general became infatuated with sentimental international pacifism, partly in reaction to World War I, but also based on the belief in the natural goodness and social benevolence of man. Frost's comment on the tragic fate of Wilson, written in 1928, is highly revealing of the illusion he perceived in Wilson's international pacifist politics:

> It's a sad story—one of the saddest in history. . . . I weaken now at the thought of him fallen with a crash almost Napoleonic. He had calibre, he saw as vastly as anyone that ever lived. He was a great something, if it was only a great mistake. And he wasn't merely his own mistake. He was the whole world's mistake . . . as much the whole world's as was Napoleon or Alexander. Some might think his failure was in missing a mark that someone to come after him will hit, but I suspect it was worse than that: he missed a mark that wasn't there in nature or in human nature.

According to Frost, the same conflict between freedom and external authority that was at the core of each individual person's relationship to society also applied to each particular nation's relationship with the world. Therefore, he vehemently opposed the idea that the legal and political sovereignty of the United States, and its legitimate self-interest, should be sacrificed to any international power, including Wilson's League of Nations. The noble cause of world peace did not justify the loss of national sovereignty.

In 1920, right after James Cox was nominated by the Democrats for the presidency, Frost stated his opposition to Cox for following Wilson's international politics, and hoped that Harding would be elected, provided he was anti-international. Frost distinguished between national isolationism and imperialist intervention in the internal affairs or conflicts of other nations, and in "Build Soil—A Political Pastoral," he

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clearly made national self-interest paramount to any international "one world" organization:

> My friends all know I'm interpersonal.
> But long before I'm interpersonal
> Away 'way down inside I'm personal.
> Just so before we're international
> We're national and act as nationals.

Twenty-six years later, in a letter to President John F. Kennedy (24 July 1962), Frost reiterated his conviction that national self-interest is primary in all international relations: "This is the way we are one world . . . of independent nations interdependent—the separateness of the parts as important as the connection of the parts." Frost believed that delegates to any international organization, such as the League of Nations or United Nations, acted as nationals in the self-interest of their respective countries, and not, as Wilson, Cox, and internationalists assumed, by an abstract code of morality and justice that transcended nationalism.

The independence of nations was primary to Frost; their interdependences were secondary, because nations, like individuals, needed to be free to pursue their own destiny.

Frost's belief that we love the things we love for what they are, from our familiarity with them, made him highly critical of those Americans who ignored their local and national loyalties while seeking to embrace an abstract love for the whole world: "We think the word 'provincial' is a shameful word here in America. But . . . you can't be universal without being provincial, can you? It's like trying to embrace the wind." Throughout his life the poet remained profoundly skeptical that any meaningful or practical and effective love and loyalty could be practiced by any individual beyond nationalism, for mankind in the abstract. Sovereignty began in the conscience of each individual, and extended to his local community and finally to his country, but not to a remote and abstract humanity:

> The question for every man and every nation is to be clear about where the first answerability lies. Are we as individuals to be answerable first only to others or to ourselves and some ideal beyond ourselves? Is the United States to be answerable first to the United Nations or to its own concept of what is right?

Frost's skepticism toward Wilson's League of Nations was extended to the United Nations after World War II.

In 1957, when Sweden gave a huge rock of pure iron ore to the United Nations, to build into its center in New York, as a symbol of nature's strength and humanity's unity, Frost was invited "to write a poem celebrating the ideal of the interdependence of the nations." He rejected the prescribed theme, and noted that iron could indeed be used to strengthen the United Nations building, but that it could also be used for weapons of war, which was historically the way with human nature and nations. He then wrote a couplet that expressed his own belief:

> Nature within her inmost self divides
> To trouble men with having to take sides.

The independence of nations was primary to Frost; their interdependences were secondary, because nations, like individuals, needed to be free to pursue their own destiny.

In an interview with Frost in 1957, James Reston summarized his negative conservative social and political views: "He is against everything and everybody that want people to rely on somebody else. He is against the United Nations. He is against the welfare state. He is against conformity and easy slogans and Madison Avenue, and he hasn't seen a President he liked since Grover Cleveland." In 1959 Louis Untermeyer, Frost's lifelong Marxist friend, also summarized what the poet most disliked, but added what he insisted upon:

> He is still against One World, World Federation, Universal Brotherhood, Unity, the breaking down of barriers in the interest of Oneness; he is unalterably against One anything. You may quote him to the effect that "Something there is that does not love a wall," but you can be sure that he much prefers the opposed quotation that "good fences make good neighbors." He insists upon Nature's divisions and differences; in art, as in nature, we want all the differences we can get. In society, too. We want people and nations to maintain their differences—even at the risk of trouble, even at the risk of fighting one another.

Frost did more than pay lip service to individual freedom; he loved personal freedom, for himself and other men and nations, with an intense and constant passion, and he refused to sacrifice any part of his independence and self-reliance for the promises of security by politicians or ideologues, whether national or international.

Within a few months after Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected President in 1932, the New Deal social welfare programs he initiated in order to solve the economic problems of the Depression convinced Frost that the Democratic Party had fallen into the hands of liberal and socialist ideologues whose conception of human nature, society, and politics was totally contrary to his own philosophy. Frost rejected the whole premise on which a centrally planned economy and regulated society was based, because he believed its assumptions violated individual liberty and the constitutional limits placed upon political power. The numerous alphabetical agencies instituted by Roosevelt's self-styled "brain trust," administered by a rapidly growing federal bureaucracy that was neither elected by the people nor responsible to them, resulted in a swift and enormous growth in arbitrary federal power. This growth was justified legally by appeals to "the general welfare" and interstate commerce clauses in the Constitution. With New Deal liberals, Frost noted, "the test is always how we treat the poor." The liberals violated justice to individuals in favor of mass mercy to the poor. According to Frost, mercy was but another name for socialism.

The constant intrusion of the federal government into the

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private lives and institutions of Americans, to force equality of condition on everyone, was to Frost the great evil of New Deal domestic politics, and the chief source of moral corruption in society. The welfare state could not save men from their inherent limitations and failures; it could only intensify their weaknesses by making them slavish wards of the state. Shortly after Roosevelt's death, when someone suggested that America needed a political Messiah to solve its economic and social problems, Frost wrote: "How can any one fail to see we have one and of the Messianic race, namely Karl Marx. And I'm not joking. F. D. R. came as near being one as I suspect a Democracy can feel the illusion of." To the poet the greatest internal danger to the United States during the 1930's was not its failure to solve the economic problems of the Depression, but the New Deal revolution in government, which destroyed many constitutional limits upon federal power and moved the nation toward a permanent egalitarian and collectivist society.

Although the external forms in the constitutional division of sovereign power between the states and federal government were maintained, the arbitrary powers usurped by the federal government destroyed the balance of power at the expense of the states, and weakened the independence of institutions and individuals. The New Deal revolutionized the whole system of taxation: instead of taxing to meet the necessary expenses of government, new government programs were multiplied in order to justify great increases in income taxes. Thus not only the economy, but every aspect of American life came under the power of federal regulatory agencies. Frost's fear that the movement of all power toward centralization in Washington would endanger corporate and private freedom was confirmed when Roosevelt attempted to pack the Supreme Court, and again when he violated the two-term tradition for Presidents and ran for office four times.

Despite his strong opposition to the New Deal (which he called "the New Deil," in Scottish dialect "the New Devil"), Frost stayed within the Democratic Party, and vowed he would continue a Democrat even if he had "to push everyone else out of the party but Carter Glass." He was convinced that he could do more good as a critic of the socialist heresies within his party than as an outsider. His attacks on New Deal economic planning were based upon the same assumptions that strict constitutional limits were necessary on any centralized authority that had always characterized his social and political philosophy. Roosevelt's domestic program, like Woodrow Wilson's international pacifism, violated the freedom of individuals and institutions by making compulsory benevolence the basis of peace, harmony, and equality among classes, just as international pacifism claimed to do among nations. Both violated legitimate self-interest as the true source of human actions, and were based upon a false theory of human nature.

Frost's opposition to New Deal liberalism came to a head in *A Further Range* (1936), in a series of satirical poems "aimed at the heads of our easy despairers of the republic and of parliamentary forms of government. I encounter too many such," the poet noted, "and my indignation mounts till it overflows in rhyme." In "Departmental" he satirized the depersonalized actions of federal bureaucrats and the "brain trust." Frost believed these New Deal supervisors were infatuated with the Soviet Russian Five Year Plan as a model for social change in America, and he called them "the guild of social planners." "A Roadside Stand" portrays such planners as "greedy good-doers, beneficent-beasts of prey," swarming over the lives of Americans, destroying their moral character, self-reliance, and integrity, by corrupting them with welfare-state bounties, which they would come to regard as entitlements and abstract "rights." "Build Soil—A Political Pastoral" was inspired by the New Deal farm policies, which Frost believed treated farmers as having "sub-marginal minds." "Provide, Provide" satirizes paternalism in government. "To a Thinker," primarily a satire on Roosevelt, also probes the larger problem of all men whose genius for self-deception makes them ambitious to play God.

Frost perceived the New Deal, at heart Henry Wallace's "century of the common man," as part of "the sweep toward collectivism in our time. In "A Considerable Speck" he attacked its humanitarian type of compulsory benevolence:

> I have none of the tenderer-than-thou
> Collectivistic regimenting love
> With which the modern world is being swept.

To the poet the New Deal was a calculating, sentimental, hypocritical, and egalitarian regime, aiming to create "a homogenized society," a regimented collective of people "all pigging together" in an undifferentiated mass, in which the cream of human nature would not be allowed to rise to the top. He confessed that he found it "harder to bear the benevolence than the despotism" of New Deal politicians in their effort to create a Utopian welfare state. He commented ironically on the indifference of New Deal liberals toward the destruction of constitutional limited government in favor of a centralized collective system: "You know how liberals are. You know how they were about the Russian revolution . . . You can pack the Supreme Court for all of them. Nothing is crucial."

Even before *A Further Range* provoked a declaration of war against Frost by the entire American political left, early in the 1930's Granville Hicks and F. O. Matthiessen, Marxist literary critics at Harvard University, and such liberals as Malcolm Cowley and Edmund Wilson, had attacked him for failing to write poems in support of the proletarian class struggle. The self-styled "intellectuals" of the left, a loose coalition of Marxists, socialists, Freudians, journalists, and academic liberals, ardently supported the New Deal, and heaped scorn on Frost's conservative social and political philosophy. During the summer of 1936 *A Further Range* was attacked in reviews by Horace Gregory in *The New Republic*, by R. P. Blackmur in *The Nation*, by Newton Arvin in *Partisan Review*, by Rolfe Humphries in *New Masses*, and by other Marxists and liberals in literary journals. The ultimate charge against Frost was that he was "a reactionary" and "a counter-revolutionary," and he was judged a second-rate poet because he refused to use his art as a means to their partisan political ends. Frost had always condemned such a theory of art as mere propaganda, as "mad glad stuff," and he argued that "it is not the business of the poet to cry for reform." He rejected the ideology of these New Deal defenders because he doubted that the problems of poverty, crime, war, ignorance, disease, and human misery ever have final or absolute solutions through political actions by government. His faith was in a free society, functioning strictly under constitutional law, making maximum use of individual initiative and motivated by self-interest. In this faith Frost was one of the most ardent defenders of the American Republic as established originally by its Founding Fathers. ◁

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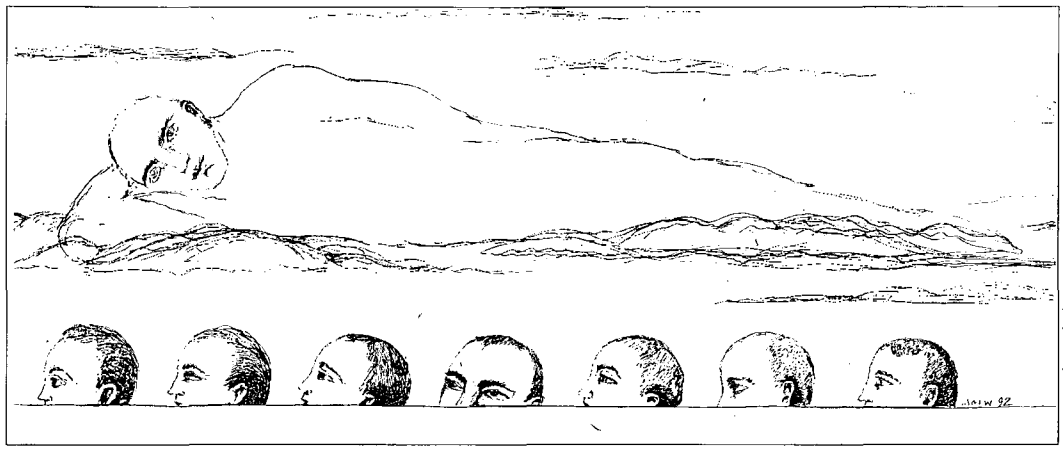
Wyndham Lewis and the Moronic Inferno

by J.O. Tate



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Looking back today at the achievements of the heroic modernists, we must do so with at least some degree of ambivalence. The presence of those colossi has receded with the passing of the years; and we no longer regard them as they themselves taught us to do. Yet they still loom on the mental horizon, and we continue to live in their long shadow.

Eliot, Pound, Joyce, and Lewis—"the men of 1914," as Wyndham Lewis himself named them—remain vital today because of the continuing viability, the relevance, and the diagnostic power of their best work. We still live in Mr. Eliot's *Waste Land*, like it or not. Madame Sosostris is still in business and sees "crowds of people, walking around in a ring" in the Unreal City. Of course, there have been some changes. The "other testimony of summer nights" are now distributed, in the best modern way, to schoolchildren. I am told that "the young man carbuncular" is now on Retin-A, and that "the typist home at teatime" is a data processor who no longer "lays out food in tins" but rather nukes it in her microwave.

I think too that the citizen who menaces Leopold Bloom in the "Cyclops" section of *Ulysses* continues to harass us via the daily news. He still doesn't "grasp" the "point." In that sense, Pound's Mr. Nixon (from *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*) is still the embodiment of the literary/publishing racket. Literature is news that *stays* news; and that Poundian prescription applies as well to much of the work of his peer, Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957).

The prophetic quality in Lewis's work is one that he himself ironically deprecated, in *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937—the first installment of his autobiography): "It is somewhat depressing to consider how as an artist one is always holding the mirror up to politics without knowing it. My picture called 'The Plan of War' painted six months before the Great War 'broke out,' as we say, depresses me. A prophet is a most unoriginal person: all he is doing is imitating something that is not there, but soon will be." But even so, to recognize the prophetic quality of Lewis's writing (as well as his painting) is not to claim for it any *predictive* authority, in the ordinary sense. We would not go to Wyndham Lewis, any more than we would to Ezra Pound, for anything so humble as practical advice. The rantings of Pound say nothing to the student of politics, in the common sense of that word; yet something may be gleaned from them if they are carefully sifted—insight into art and cultures, the integrity of craftsmanship, the implications of massive debt. The man in the street could have told Pound that Mussolini was somehow *not* Jefferson—but when does a self-appointed "genius" heed the common or the obvious wisdom? Wyndham Lewis in his *Hitler* (1931) fell flat on his face refusing to acknowledge what was already transparent. He thought that Herr Hitler was a "man of peace" and that anti-Semitic outrages were routine street theater. Wyndham Lewis was wrong about that, wasn't he? No, his political sense was flawed by an internal agenda that sometimes blinded him. It is his *visionary politics*, not his journalism, that retains a prophetic power today.

That agenda, I would say, can be understood by bearing in mind two ideas. The first is the Cartesian mind/body split—one which Wyndham Lewis did *not* see as a division to be overcome (as Eliot did his "dissociation of sensibility"). The second is the Nietzschean injunction to rise above the herd, to which we may attach Lewis's modernist presumption of the superiority of the artist. A great deal that is off-putting or baffling about Lewis's (and Pound's) writings can be explained if not justified by an assumption that the purpose of politics was to provide a platform for the artist. That was what civilization was supposed to be—a society in which an honest artist could make a living. If prescriptive leadership was necessary to secure the artist's peace, so be it—whatever it took to pacify the mob, the ones who need to be told what to do.

The great irony, of course, is that a man like Wyndham Lewis—a cantankerous contrarian, among other things—was and would have been the last individual useful to any totalitarian government for the very reason of his unflinching individualism. And when he was an old blind man, to some degree he came to grasp the point. But even so there is something salvageable and much of value in the social cri-

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tique, fictional vision, and satiric insight of Wyndham Lewis in his most elitist and unrelenting guise.

Set apart by his birth (on a yacht moored at Amherst, Nova Scotia), and as an only child by his father's absence and by his mother's intense love, Lewis was always "the Man from Nowhere." He himself claimed that the Continent, where he studied life and art in Madrid, Munich, and Paris, undid the effects of his English education at Rugby and the Slade School of art. But Lewis would not be satisfied to be the young lion of British art—he wanted something more and exploded in at least two other directions while personifying the latest developments in avant-garde art in England. He began writing stories, sketches, and essays as early as 1908, and later led the Vorticist movement after his feud with Roger Fry, Clive Bell, and Bloomsbury ruined his career as a painter. His early writings culminated in his Vorticist revolt in *Blast* I (1914), that movement itself blasted by the First World War, in *Tarr* (1918), and in *The Wild Body* (1927). Lewis had already done more than most artists do in a lifetime; but when he returned from the war, his peers T. E. Hulme and Gaudier-Brzeska were dead and his career at a dead end. It was time to go "underground" and take on the *Zeitgeist*.

Wyndham Lewis, more than any other writer, represents the penetration of Continental ideas into Britain and the English speaking world in the early 20th century. Precisely because of his "outsider" status and nature, he stands apart from the Anglo-American tradition of political and social thought—we hear little from him of the parliamentary mode, of "politics" in the ordinary sense, and not until *Rotting Hill* (1951), of ordinary bourgeois and civic concerns. Though Lewis cited Burke approvingly in his old age, there is little sense of traditional polity, or of a Madisonian sense of the balance of powers, in his work. We hear instead of Schopenhauer, Proudhon, Sorel, Bergson—of an "illegitimate" and radical tradition of speculation and extremity. Lewis has reminded more than one reader of Dostoyevsky in his gift for dramatizing ideas and in his sensitivity to intellectual crisis. Both modernist and modern, Lewis's sense that settled ways of thinking had been made irrelevant by the destruction of the old world did not make him a political prognosticator, but it did lend him a power of prophetic insight into a radically new world.

In his last letter to his old mentor, T. Sturge Moore, Lewis looked back on his wild ride through a violent time—a course that was not yet over, when he wrote in 1941:

> How calm those days were before the epoch of wars and social revolution, when you used to sit on one side of your work-table and I on the other, and we would talk—with trees and creepers of the placid Hampstead domesticity beyond the windows, and you used to grunt with a philosophic despondence I greatly enjoyed. It was the last days of the Victorian world of artificial peacefulness—of the R. S. P. C. A. and London Bobbies, of "slumming" and Buzzards cakes. As at that time I had never heard of anything else, it seemed to my young mind in the order of nature. You—I suppose—knew it was all like the stunt of an illusionist. You taught me many things. But you never taught me *that*. I first discovered about it in 1914—with growing surprise and disgust.

Lewis's sense of the treacherous nature of "reality"—of the deception of appearances—is here expressed as personal experience when it was also intellectual conviction. In either case, his apprehension of the century has been confirmed by events; and his insights seem now to be incisive CAT-scans and instructive X rays of a new order, a qualitatively different kind of society.

The proto-Fascist politics of *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926) are a species of irony. Lewis has turned Machiavelli on his head, writing a treatise on how to be ruled rather than instruction for a ruler; but the conditions of politics have been changed forever, and the ruler will never be so simple and so humane as a Cesare Borgia. The new mass-world of urban democracy, advertising, the rapidly developing media, behaviorism—the manipulative agents are more numerous, more deceptive, and more powerful than ever. Lewis knows how to break down "the individual" so there is nothing left that cannot be controlled. In a passage that anticipates our monstrous routine, he shows how the rulers do the job:

> The more classes . . . that you can make him become regularly conscious of, the more you can control him, the more of an automaton he becomes. Thus, if a man can be made to feel himself acutely (a) an American, (b) a young American, (c) a middle-west young American, (d) a "radical and enlightened" middle-west young American, (e) a "college-educated" dentist who is an etc. etc., (g) a "college-educated" dentist of such-and-such a school of dentistry, etc. etc.,—the more inflexible each of these links is, the more powerful, naturally, is the chain. Or he can be locked into any of these compartments as though by magic by anyone understanding the wires . . .

We have become so inured to the Art of Ruling today—"education" instructs us in such convenient categories—that our comprehension has been dulled along with our sense of outrage. Wyndham Lewis is a pertinent instructor in how we are set against each other, for the advantage of the ruling powers: the class war, the sex war, racial division, the generation gap, etc. As Terence Hegarty pointed out ten years ago, Lewis saw that "freedom" can be a highly useful illusion, as for example the triumph of feminism: "[A]n important economic function of feminism, as political exploitation, is 'the releasing of the hordes of idle women . . . for industrial purposes.' . . . In the day-to-day arena of ordinary life, this aspect of 'women's liberation'—by which most women, like most men, spend their time doing other people's work rather than their own—removes the last bit of real freedom possessed by any persons of low or moderate means." Lewis's ability to penetrate the surface of statist propaganda anticipates the contemporary

Lewis's ability to penetrate the surface of statist propaganda anticipates the contemporary situation by more than half a century.

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situation by more than half a century. His disassembly of the progressive mind-set is still instructive today, as when he notes that "[male inversion] is as an integral part of feminism proper that it should be considered a phase of the sex war. The 'homo' is the legitimate child of the 'suffragette.'" Such observations, however, constituted only a part of Lewis's reaction to what he called a "moronic inferno of insipidity and decay."

Time and Western Man (1927) shows how the cults of infantilism, sentimentality, nostalgia, "democracy," "time," modern physics, relativism, advertising, mechanization, Bergsonian flux, Spenglerian dialectic, and subjectivity are expressed in and through such characters as Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, Charlie Chaplin, James Joyce, and various philosophers of the one-way song of the modern progressive mentality. Lewis prescribes as a potent antidote to the erosion of contours, the melting of forms, and the collapse of external reality the calm of classical certitude, the hard shell of firmness, even the stasis to which he drove his satirical vision in a titanic effort to stop time.

The Childermass (1928) has been described by Hugh Kenner as "simply *The Art of Being Ruled* dramatized." This Dantesque fantasy of the afterlife shows that state to be a grotesque parody of the one we already live in, with superb passages of mock-Joyce and ersatz Stein. The static puppet show of the politics of heaven is a visionary nightmare that will always be "true." Pulley, Satters, and the Bailiff are a moronic inferno in themselves, effigies of Joyce, Stein, and the *Zeitgeist* who would today—in less heroic times—be represented by lesser but not more sinister apes (Harold Brodkey, Alice Walker, and Bill Moyers?). *The Childermass* is probably the peak of Lewis's verbal resourcefulness—a work to classify with *Sartor Resartus*, the Alice books of Lewis Carroll, and *Finnegans Wake*.

Lewis's biggest book, *The Apes of God* (1930), is also still true, though it is a highly focused and specific satire of individuals and trends. Never mind that it was to the wistful sensitives of Bloomsbury what Jack the Ripper was to so many tarts. The book should be thought of as a prophecy of the 1960's and as an indispensable Baedeker to the art world of today, in which a pile of dirt is "a statement" and the visual arts are inextricably tangled with the politics of drugs, rock and roll, the fashion industry, pornography, money, and the world view that sanctions Robert Christo's shrinkwraps, Judy Chicago's "The Dinner Party," and the AIDS quilt as works of art. Certain little questions that do not get asked today—about the lack of creativity, of integrity, of mind—are framed forever in Lewis's immortal representation of a fraudulent *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. The depiction of preposterous puppets who actually think they are alive is intended to remind us of something that is still forgotten—namely, that we are not supposed to seem dead until we *are*. The phrase "Night of the Living Dead" should denote an interesting horror movie—not the New York art and publishing world now or Bloomsbury then.

Men Without Art (1934), containing famous attacks on Hemingway and Virginia Woolf, is another assertion that we live in a world without that indispensable thing we talk so much about and have so little of. Lewis's own books, some say, lacked in that quality itself to some degree—the first two essays I have cited are eccentric and hard going; the second two fictions are static in the extreme and not for everyone, though I think that in their unrelenting demands they are modernist masterpieces. After *Snooty Baronet* (1932), Lewis abandoned the puppet-images he had overemphasized and mellowed sufficiently to write novels that were not only more humane in tone and substance but were also more accessible and appealing. He had lost, however, none of his obsessive power and little of his prophetic touch. *The Revenge for Love* (1937)—perhaps the greatest political novel of this century—is a superbly crafted work that shows the strained relation between the phony parlor-pinks of Britain and international communism in the context of the Spanish Civil War as well as the price there is to be paid when human reality is distorted by ideology. His most readable and traditional work, *The Revenge for Love* shows how much Lewis gained when he let go some of his determination to avoid sympathetic characterization itself in order to avoid sentimentality and clichés. Is it necessary to add that this great novel, being politically incorrect, was no success—except in the ways that matter most?

After Wyndham Lewis spent what he called "World War No. 2" in the United States and Canada, he returned to a diminished Britain that he portrayed in the stories of *Rotting Hill*. Once again a war had blasted away much of his reputation. When he started over this time, he had to do so in his old age, and as he did so he began to lose his sight. But he never lost his internal vision, his verbal energy, his courage, or his savage humor. In "My Disciple" he shows an ape of himself who has mastered the new world of art appreciation for the masses. Mr. Gartsides will be an art director in a new college—and here Lewis anticipates what has happened to American education in the last thirty years. "If only he could learn to paint. . . ." But "Wyndham Lewis"—a character in the story—ironically *approves* of Gartsides' regarding art as an "uproarious racket," since that is how the tonier parasites had always done the job.

Toward the end of his life, Lewis seemed to have gained perspective on his extraordinary existence even as he lost his sight. *Self-Condemned* (1954) reviews his self-destructive path in leaving England during the war and the larger theme of the necessary results of his top-lofty self-absorption. The protagonist was condemned by himself and by no one else; but the narrative also condemns self as a preoccupation. *Self-Condemned* contains Lewis's truest self-portrait in the picture of René Harding, and in the representation of his wife Hester, what amounts to an apology to his own spouse for the hard time she had endured with him. René Harding winds up as only a "glacial shell" at a mediocre college—obviously a fate worse than death. But Harding was not Wyndham Lewis, who was productive until his demise. He returned to his vision of the next world in his sequels to *The Childermass*, *Monstre Gai* and *Malign Fiesta*; finished *The Red Priest*; and had begun *Twentieth Century Pallette* before he died. The last phase of Lewis's career was perhaps even more astonishing than his outpouring in the 20's. And though I have not said much here about his life as an artist, the recognition that has lately come to him should be cited. Wyndham Lewis has taken his place in the history of modern art as well as literature, and such great paintings as *The Surrender of Barcelona* have their place in the record of his achievement alongside the familiar portraits. It is doubly right that we remember Lewis's representation of them first when we bring to mind the images of Eliot, Pound, Joyce, Edith Sitwell, and Stephen Spender.

Wyndham Lewis received a tremendous recognition from the few people we could call his peers. Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* cannot be comprehended (if that is possible) without ac-

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counting for all the allusions to Lewis, his works, and his attacks on Joyce. Eliot called Lewis "the only writer among my contemporaries to create a new, an original prose style . . . the most fascinating personality of our time." Pound communicated with Lewis during five decades and placed him in the *Cantos* more than once. W. B. Yeats admired *Time and Western Man*, *The Childermass*, and *The Apes of God*, and rightly compared Lewis to Jonathan Swift. Such was but some of the esteem accorded to the visionary who honored, and who erected, monuments of unaging intellect.

Wyndham Lewis expected "the herd"—that is to say, ourselves—to respond gratefully to his heroic demands and scathing representations. His view of humanity—icy, abstract, Hobbesian, and removed from the liberal tradition—has been seen as Fascist, inhuman, and cruel. To some degree, he acknowledged that himself. The trouble is, of course, that sentimentality and vanity keep us from acknowledging the truth of an impersonal contempt. Small-minded Lilliput, coarse Brobdingnag, and preposterous Laputa (complete with its academy) have been and remain valid models of our world. Dean Swift's wisdom is so uncomfortable that it is relegated to children—and professors.

The *saeva indignatio* of Wyndham Lewis made him the historical counterfoil of Joyce, the opposite of D. H. Lawrence, and the male chauvinist nightmare of Virginia Woolf. As the self-styled "Enemy" of modern dissolution, he was the champion of objectivity, space, reason, and order. He was the poet of the *outside* of things, and stood against all mush and gush, rejecting mediocrity, romanticism, and regression. Modern British literature is inconceivable without him, but he has not any more than Swift receded into the purely historical museum world to become only a relic of his day.

Wyndham Lewis comes to mind often these days, and not only when we remember such characters as Tarr, Pulley and Satters, Horace Zagreus, Vincent Penhale, and René Harding. He comes to mind when we consider that until recently Pee-Wee Herman was thought to be just the person to instruct the nation's youth. He comes to mind when we consider apes of God like Andy Warhol, Keith Haring, and Julian Schnabel. He comes to mind when we routinely slip-slide in the slop of smarm that passes for public discourse today. He comes to mind when we consider the brave new world of interactive television, "virtual reality," and the multiculturalism promoted by the powers that be.

Above all, he comes to mind when we recall some of the illusions of Modernism itself—particularly the thought that a great work of art has the power to change the world. The reactionary modernist certainly had something to react against—not only the seizure of his charisma by phonies and bureaucracies, but also the departure of the "herd" for the exit marked "easy way out." Just as Pound's Imagism degenerated into "Amygism," so did "modern art" and Vorticism turn into the smiley faces finger painted by the Gartsides of this world. "Art" became "self-expression"; "poetry" can be "taught"; "the personal is the political." In a "democracy," the custodial engineer gets to write the curriculum.

Considering the drone of the media, the complacency of the established powers, and the cud-chewing indifference of the citizenry, we have today better reason than ever before to appreciate not only Wyndham Lewis's prophetic exasperation but also why he considered his fellow creatures a herd. ◁©▷

The Wife Beater's Punishment (With Commentary)

by Richard Moore

When he knocked out her tooth
(a beautiful incisor)
he lost his wife—plain truth:
he didn't recognize her.

Those verses sad and gory,
feminists brash and clubby,
began with a true story:
a wife thus bashed her hubby.

But *woman in a craze*
beats up her man in tales
lacks credence nowadays.
In fiction, thugs are males.

In life—I'll make a sonnet
and add—*don't depend on it.*

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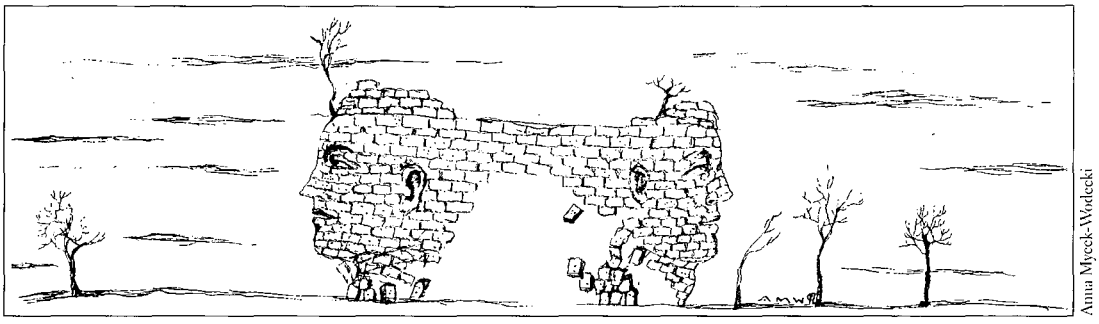
Stupid Conservatives

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

"A Conservative is only a Tory who is ashamed of himself."
—J. Hookham Frere



Anna Mycek-Wadecki

The Conservative Crack-Up
by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.
New York: Simon & Schuster;
319 pp., $23.00

◆

On page 62 of this book, the author recalls with irritation having once been accused by Murray Kempton of dishonoring the "legacy" of His Master's Voice, H. L. Mencken, by "conformism." How, Tyrrell demanded incredulously, was it possible for *him* to be the conformist in a debate in which all the other participants and an audience of "upper-crust" Manhattanites were in "superlative dudgeon over my every expressed thought?" Perhaps the answer to his question is that Mencken deliberately avoided meeting most of the politicians of his own day in order that he might not like them, while Emmett Tyrrell has sedulously cultivated those of his time in order that they might like him.

Although Tyrrell deplores the creature Peter Brimelow has dubbed "The Stupid Conservative," he himself is the epitome of The Career Conservative, a subspecies of the breed when it is not actually one and the same thing. "In the rough-and-tumble times of the movement's early days," he writes, "no Stupid Conservative could survive. But by the time of the Reagan-Bush ascendancy, rhetoric came easy. One could be a parrot and pass for a conservative. Bright fellows were still around, but they were being overwhelmed by the Stupid Conservatives and it was usually the Stupid Conservative whom the *Kultursmog* would cite on those rare occasions when citing a conservative was useful." (Is this the explanation for the blurb by Norman Mailer that appears on the dust jacket of *The Conservative Crack-Up*?)

In reality, the Stupid or Career Conservative is not usually as stupid as he sounds. Like the member of a street gang in Los Angeles, he tirelessly patrols his turf—that immense elongated slum stretching southward along the Eastern Seaboard from Boston to Washington, D. C.—making all the appropriate tribal sounds and mugging, beating, and robbing imprudent interlopers or simply people who have the temerity to establish eye contact with him. In common with the Crips or the Bloods, the Stupid Conservative has street smarts and a keen animal shrewdness sufficient to raise him to high positions at the foundations, the Department of Education, and even the White House. As with all gangsters and careerists, the Stupid Conservative values power, money, and prestige, to which he is happy to sacrifice truth, honor, and personal integrity. Like them, finally, he has inordinate vanity, and he will readily expend an arsenal of ICBMs in the defense not only of his political and bureaucratic turf, but of his tender ego.

As observers of the so-called conservative movement for the past quarter-century know, Mr. Tyrrell's vanity is as tremendous as his literary abilities are negligible. *The Conservative Crack-Up* adds hitherto unsuspected dimensions to the concept of the self-made man; for its gall, vulgarity, and sheer effrontery, it must be compared with Norman Podhoretz's *Making It*—a comparison its author would no doubt find flattering. In his book, Tyrrell manages to patronize and exploit everyone from Ronald Reagan, William Buckley, Irving Kristol, and Malcolm Muggeridge to his own ex-wife. My first reaction to *The Conservative Crack-Up* was to wonder how such an inveterate ego-stroker and influence-peddler could have brought himself to squander the social and political capital so carefully accumulated over twenty-five years. But reading further, I understood. R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr. is filled with a smoldering resentment at not finding himself the acknowledged conservative leader for the 1990's that Buckley was for the 50's and 60's, a crushing disappointment for which the present volume is his sweet revenge. (For confirmation of this judgment see page 239, where the author upbraids an older generation of American conservatives for their unwillingness "to confer authority on a new generation of forty-year-old leaders. . . .")

What Tyrrell solemnly refers to as "my art" is to the work of his model Henry Mencken what Florence Foster Jenkins' "singing" was to the art of Maria Callas. *The Conservative Crack-Up* is not a book; it is an exercise in imitation

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of writing a book, aping the sound and fury of literature but signifying nothing. Reading it, I was reminded of what Raymond Chandler said of literary imitators: "They can't steal your style, if you have one. They can as a rule only steal your faults." But even if the writing were competent, Tyrrell's appalling self-importance would overwhelm it. In a book that is literally filled with preposterous passages, surely this one is among the most pathetic:

> The maturing of *The American Spectator* towards adulthood [during the Reagan presidency] had transformed us from the college magazine we were when Nixon-Agnew had us on the White House Rolodex. Images of Arthur Schlesinger's fate during the Kennedy years made an unwelcome appearance in my mind's eye. Would I become the Reaganites' Schlesinger, resorted to for felicitous quotations, for learned anecdotes lifted from scholarly histories, for liaisons with the intelligentsia? Would I have to go all the way, my every reference to Reagan becoming a servile panegyric, my every visit to a Reagan party placing me in imminent peril of a dunking in every pool? That was the sort of treatment that Camelot accorded poor Schlesinger.

Well—not to worry, as they say in New York.

The Conservative Crack-Up portrays Emmett Tyrrell and *The American Spectator* as the Vital Center of American conservatism, which they rescued in the late 1960's from the waning conservative alliance of traditionalists, libertarians, and anticommunists that had dominated the 1950's. At General Tyrrell's trumpet call, "Irving Kristol's crowd came to the rescue": the neoconservatives, who were "more given to the pursuit of ideas than to the pursuit of power" and who possessed moreover a temperament conducive to public engagement and activism that the "fuddy-duddy" paleoconservatives lacked along with "imagination." The glory years of neoconservatism, which were the late 70's, culminated in the election of Ronald Reagan ("among the first neoconservatives") to the presidency, but the movement went into decline almost immediately afterward, as the academically minded neos (apparently fuddy-duddy and unimaginative in their own right) lost out at the White House to Betsy Bloomingdale and Oscar de la Renta. Meanwhile, the paleos—bored already by the noble art of politics—were taking their cue from the great neoconservative statesman, Dr. William Bennett, and retiring in droves back to their vines and fig trees after having declared the counterrevolution victorious. Unfortunately, however, the neos and paleos had failed together to create a "political culture" analogous to that fabricated by the New Dealers, which succeeded in preserving the leftist mainstream culture throughout a succession of Republican administrations. The result of this failure is what Tyrrell means by "the conservative crack-up," which he believes is "not likely to end until the Liberals' political libido is brought to conservatism." And how might that be accomplished? Tyrrell's answer is that George Bush, though "a politician built in conformity with Oakeshott's formulae," is still not the bogey for the liberals that Reagan was: therefore, the prospect for reconciliation exists. "Let the Liberals take the path once trod by the neoconservatives"—through the pages of *The American Spectator*, I suppose.

Perhaps because he confesses to having given American culture short shrift in his years as a magazine editor, Tyrrell pays the subject extended attention in his book. "There is something sickly," he says, "about American social and cultural life—both are shapeless and close to meaningless." One cause of the sickness is the left-liberal cultural hegemony he calls the *Kultursmog*; the other is the philistinism of American conservatives, the majority of them self-made businessmen whose favorite author is not T. S. Eliot but Ayn Rand. Intellectuals and artists are a minority within conservatism, as they are not within liberalism; that minority, furthermore, is susceptible to antipolitical and defeatist ideas. The activists have no culture, while the cultured have no activism. The result is the lack in America of "a conservative counter-culture" that permits the radical pseudoculture to reign unchallenged, while stunting the development of conservative politics which is forced to grow from shallow and undernourished soil. The conservatives, Tyrrell complains, fail to recognize "the importance of ideas and art to politics," while the liberals have always understood how to exploit the connection.

In the context of Tyrrell's criticism, I find it interesting to recall certain remarks published by his mentor, Irving Kristol, in a recent number of *National Review* (16 March 1992). "Pat Buchanan," Mr. Kristol wrote,

> is not a conservative, he is a reactionary. Now, I am fond of *cultural* reactionaries, because the reactionary impulse can be so creative and fruitful in its cultural dimensions. After all, the three greatest poets in the English language in this century—W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and Philip Larkin—have been reactionaries. So have been some of our finest novelists (*e.g.*, Evelyn Waugh). But in a dynamic, capitalist society, being a *political* reactionary is a ticket to oblivion. We have seen this happen with some of our Southern novelists, poets, and critics—among our finest—who tried, back in the 1920's, to translate literary nostalgia into a sort of pseudo-agrarian social program. This was, and remains, little more than a cultural oddity. Similarly, Pope Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors* ought to be studied by all liberals, who would benefit from the challenge to their basic beliefs. But political conservatives who take it too seriously are doomed to irrelevance. . . . [T]he basic thrust of [the paleoconservatives] is, in a profound sense, radical and antipolitical.

As I understand this passage, Kristol is advocating a "wall of separation" between the cultural and the political life of the nation. Curiously, he seems not to understand that yoking pragmatic neoconservative politics with what he calls "reactionary" and Tyrrell "fuddy-duddy" ideas is the prescription for a movement of schizophrenics—not of realists and activists. Honest and courageous men, who take their own ideas and those of other people seriously, do not (because they cannot) acknowledge the truth of these ideas to be only relatively or selectively applicable among the various activities of mankind. You cannot, if you have the intellect and integrity of Eliot, be an elitist in art, a so-

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cial democrat in politics, and a Wesleyan Methodist in religion—not, anyway, and maintain your sanity; and it is the height of folly to think that the artistic preoccupations of Allen Tate could have allowed him to be enthusiastic about federal troops enforcing racial equality in the South, while worshiping with the Unitarian Church.

Culture shapes politics, not politics culture; which is to say, if you wish to reform the political life of a society, you must transform its cultural one first. In the words of George Ade, "In uplifting, get underneath." Tyrrell appears to believe that every sincere, intelligent, and above all responsible conservative owes it to his country to become a political activist, and to eschew all those futile and embarrassing ideas that the majoritarian sentiment of his time rejects. If the prophets of old had thought similarly, Judaism would most likely have collapsed from moral dry rot centuries before Christ; had the apostles agreed with him, the most rapid and complete transformation of world culture known to history could not have taken place. There has always been a role in the world for politicians, as for prophets; but why denigrate Russell Kirk because he is not Jeane Kirkpatrick? In the long run, the prophetic voice prevails over the political one. Christianity triumphed not by imperial proclamation, but by simple word of mouth. What America needs today is fewer Stupid Conservatives—careerists, bureaucrats, trimmers, and that specially dangerous sort of establishmentarian known as the activist—and more prophets willing to speak what they know to be the truth. But their reward, as Emmett Tyrrell well knows, will not be to have the President of the United States lowered by helicopter onto the sunken floor of a comfortable upper-middle-class residence in Arlington, Virginia. The prophet, as Flannery O'Connor once remarked, can expect only the worst.

REVISION

SINCLAIR LEWIS

by Bill Kauffman

Late in life, Harry Sinclair Lewis of Sauk Centre, Minnesota, figured something out: he would soon be forgotten. In a mock self-obituary, Lewis foresaw that he would leave "no literary descendants. . . . Whether this is a basic criticism of [Lewis's] pretensions to power and originality, or whether, like another contemporary, Miss Willa Cather, he was an inevitably lone and insulated figure, we have not as yet the perspective to see." Half a century later, the perspective is just fine but Lewis, the first American to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, has vanished. He is heirless and unread; Mark Schorer, his principal biographer, allowed that Lewis, a truculent acne-ridden boozer, "was one of the worst writers in modern American literature" to boot.

Yes, he was a garrulous drunk and a lousy, inattentive father and possibly a bad husband. (In his defense, his second wife, the newspaper oracle Dorothy Thompson—"the Talking Woman," Lewis called her—was no saintly helpmeet. Alice Roosevelt Longworth called Thompson "the only woman in history who has had her menopause in public and made it pay.") But Sinclair Lewis did write several excellent comic novels about people from the places he knew best: the one-horse towns and bustling small cities of Minnesota. He trained his mordant wit upon them because he loved them—because to Sinclair Lewis, Zenith and Gopher Prairie and Grand Republic were the only places in the world that really mattered. In his declining years he lamented, "my father has never forgiven me for *Main Street* . . . He can't comprehend the book, much less grasp that it's the greatest tribute I knew how to pay him . . . *Main Street* condemned me in his eyes as a traitor to my heritage—whereas the truth is, I shall never shed the little, indelible 'Sauk-centricities' that enabled me to write it."

Deliciously, appositely, Sauk Centre is the keeper of the Sinclair Lewis flame. The novelist's boyhood home is a museum; the high school football team is called the Main Streeters. Some find this ironic but I think it's perfect, for Sinclair Lewis was a hayseed of the sort that is found in every crossroads burg: the debunker, the scoffer, the town atheist whose deepest secret (which his neighbors know, which is why they tolerate, even cherish him) is that he loves his village with an ardor that is almost embarrassing.

Harry Sinclair Lewis was born in 1885, the son of a country doctor in a dirt-road, Minnesota town. He had the gift of seeing himself as both of and apart from his surroundings. "While I was a mediocre sportsman in Boytown, I was neither a cripple nor a Sensitive Soul," he remembered with an odd pride that any small-town lad can understand. His memories of childhood were invariably happy, much to the puzzlement of a clerisy that consistently misread his books. A middle-aged Lewis told the Sauk Centre high school yearbook: "I could have been born and reared in no place in the world where I would have had more friendliness . . . It was a good time, a good place and a good preparation for life."

Young Lewis enjoyed reading H. G. Wells and Thomas Hardy, but his imagination was fired by Hamlin Garland's stories of hardscrabble Dakota farms and families. "If I ever succeed in expressing anything of Minnesota and its neighbors, you will be largely responsible," he wrote to Garland in 1915, "for it was in your books that the real romance of that land was first revealed to me."

It takes a keen eye and sympathetic heart to find romance on Garland's plains; I suspect that Lewis was inspirited most by the Son of the Middle Border's 1894 manifesto *Crumbling Idols*, a full-throated war cry on behalf of an American literature of place. "Each locality must produce its own literary record," Garland exhorted. "Be true to yourself, true to your locality, and true to your time." For all his biliousness and vagaries and venom, Sinclair Lewis kept that faith. He was proudly—defiantly—Midwestern. As a green newsman in 1908, Lewis prophesied in the Waterloo, Iowa, *Daily Courier*: "The artist capable of the really vital and American play is far more likely to hail from the fresh brightness and unscoured genuineness of the Corn Belt than he is from the New York millions."

Lewis's first vital and American novel was his fifth, *Main Street* (1920). When

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the vivacious newlywed Carol Kennicott moved to Gopher Prairie with her stolid husband Will, a country doctor, the Minnesotan Lewis was working within a regional realist field plowed years ago by Garland, Joseph Kirkland, Mary Wilkins Freeman, Edgar Ward Watson Howe, Harold Frederic, and others. What set *Main Street* apart from its predecessors was its astringent humor; earlier novels had measured the spiritual poverty of frontier villages, but never with Lewis's tartness. Hamlin Garland hated the book for "belittling . . . the descendants of the old frontier."

There are passages of pure vitriol in *Main Street*, though the bitterest observations are usually attributed to the foolish Carol. She sees in Gopher Prairie "an unimaginatively standardized background, a sluggishness of speech and manners, a rigid ruling of the spirit by the desire to appear respectable. It is contentment . . . the contentment of the quiet dead, who are scornful of the living for their restless walking. It is negation canonized as the one positive virtue. It is the prohibition of happiness. It is slavery self-sought and self-defended. It is dullness made God."

Harsh, yes, but even the most slobbering Valley of Democracy sentimentalist must recognize the ring of truth. If one really *belongs* to a village, is a part of the corporate whole, then all sorts of crotchets and queer behavior are permitted ("Aww, that's just Joe; he's like that"). But if, like Carol, one is from outside—and if the outsider is "notional"—then life can be miserable, and the witches of every American Gopher Prairie will sneer: "Who does she think she is?" Lewis claimed that his novel was an act of fealty; he wrote it, he said, from "a love of Main Street, from a belief in Main Street's inherent power." His next novel—*Babbitt* (1922), Lewis's grandest achievement—validated this claim.

Our guide through the city of Zenith is George Babbitt, real-estate booster and incorrigible joiner, the finest character Lewis ever created. Babbitt is the apostle and the apotheosis of the Standardized American Citizen. He is bully for progress: Zenith has "the finest school-ventilating system in the country," he brags; her outstanding flaw is her slowness in "extending the paving of motor boulevards." He extols the new, the big, the efficient, yet in his truest heart he is loyal to the smallest and homeliest piece of his world: his family and his friends.

With the publication of *Babbitt*, a critical refrain began to be heard: all of Lewis's Midwestern characters talk alike. That's the highbrow line, and say, maybe fer once them Greenwich Village birds are posolutely, absotively right. Darned if a reg'lar captain of industry like Sam Dodsworth don't talk an awful lot like that dub Lowell Schmaltz and that four-flusher Elmer Gantry and even a real he-American like George Babbitt, yessirree!

Was Lewis lazy, or was there a method to this sameness? In his unpublished introduction to *Babbitt*, Lewis noted, "Differences [between cities] have for a long time now tended to decrease, so powerful is our faith in standardization . . . Hartford and Milwaukee—the citizens of those two distant cities go to the same offices, speak the same patois on the same telephones, go to the same lunch and the same athletic clubs, etc."

Zenith had joined the mad scramble to imitate the big cities; it was losing its provincialism—and Lewis, contrary to myth, was a provincial of the first water. The disease of universal culture was spreading even to the Gopher Prairies. Small towns "all want to be just like Zenith," Vergil Gunch crowed to George Babbitt over a poker pot. Zenith, in turn, wanted to be just like Chicago . . . which wanted to be just like New York. (*Babbitt*'s original title was *Population 300,000*; Lewis hoped to inspire rude young bards in Omaha, Rochester, Cincinnati, Louisville. . . .) *Babbitt* is a kind of regionalist dystopia. The sons of the pioneers had traded in their buckskins for the drab dress greys of conformity. George is a fool not because he is provincial but because he has bought into the lie of mass culture.

Lewis walked it like he talked it. He used his fame to promote fellow novelists of place. Besides Willa Cather, he whooped it up for Booth Tarkington, the gentleman from Indiana, and Ruth Suckow, with her German Iowa farmers. He urged young writers to stay put and to avoid New York City at all costs. He cracked: "America—the literary map of it, apparently, shows three cities, New York, Chicago and New Orleans; then a stretch inhabited by industrious Swedes who invariably (after an edifying struggle) become college professors or rich farmers; then a noble waste still populated by cowpunchers speaking the purest 1870; finally, a vast domain called Hollywood. But actually there are portions of the United States not included in this favorite chart." America deserved a "literature worthy of her vastness," Lewis declared in his 1930 Nobel acceptance speech. (This fine address was marred by an unfair swipe at William Dean Howells for having "the code of a pious old maid whose greatest delight was to have tea at the vicarage." Funny, but unfair. Howells was Hamlin Garland's mentor and rather an enthusiast for the Midwestern realists so admired by Lewis.)

His vagabondage carried him across the American vastness many times. Although Lewis's happiest adult years were spent on his Vermont farm, he tried to come home to Minnesota in the 1940's. He spoke to numerous civic groups: "Stay West, Young Woman," he urged the University of Minnesota's coeds, and he earnestly promised the citizens of Duluth his "help in setting up a few stones in what may be a new Athens."

He became—no, he always was—a booster *par excellence*. He memorized Minnesota's 87 counties and county seats, alphabetically, just like the eponymous hero of *Cass Timberlane*. Lewis's friend, the artist Adolph Dehn, recalled, "He looked at all my Minnesota scenes but wasn't interested in landscapes outside the state, or pictures of anything non-Minnesota." As one appalled Duluth matron said, "The man who wrote *Babbitt* actually loved Babbitts."

Like other independent American writers (Jack Kerouac the Catholic Taft Republican, Hamlin Garland the Jefferson-Jackson democrat, Gore Vidal the patrician republican), Lewis befuddled the literary mafia with his politics. Dorothy Thompson called him "an old-fashioned populist American radical" with "a deep feeling for tradition." He was a cultural and political America Firster: part Upper Midwest maverick, part George Babbitt Rotary Republican. "Intellectually, I know America is no better than any other country," he wrote in 1930."Emotionally, I know she is better than every other country." A story is told of Lewis attending a magic show in England in 1921. When the magician made a snide crack about America, Lewis stood up and shouted, "Take that back! Take that back!" The flustered

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thaumaturge apologized and left the stage.

He was a welter of contradictions, a caustic sentimentalist. "He mocked the cruder manifestations of Yankee Imperialism because he was, at heart, a fanatic American," the novelist wrote of himself. He kidded George Babbitt for his indifference to Europe and turned around and joined the America First Committee. When *The Nation* asked Lewis, a La Follette man, to return to Gopher Prairie and cover the 1924 election, he submitted a piece in which the Coolidge supporter, Doc Kennicott, gets off all the best lines.

He was a devotee of Henry David Thoreau, although Lewis's Walden included a mansion and servants. His most poignant characters, whether Sam Dodsworth or George Babbitt or Fred Cornplow of *The Prodigal Parents*, long to ignore the crowd and follow the inner light. "Why is it that nobody ever does do any of the things that he's free to do?" is the Thoreauvian question that recurs in almost every Lewis novel. Babbitt would flower if he just had the confidence to be his hick self.

Much as his friend H. L. Mencken committed public suicide with his anti-New Deal polemics, so did Sinclair Lewis slit his throat in 1938 with the publication of *The Prodigal Parents*. This unjustly obscure novel—in some ways a rewrite of *Babbitt*—features a wholly sympathetic upstate New York auto dealer named Fred Cornplow, self-declared president of the "Mind Your Own Business Association." Fred's children are spoiled lotus-eating Reds: when not cadging money from Pop, Fred's son drones at the dinner table: "Dad, did you realize that in the past year . . . the growth in production in heavy industry in the Ural section of Russia has been two hundred and seventeen percent?"

Slowly it dawns on Fred that his family is not atypical: America is being remade, and the Cornplows—the small independent businessmen, backbones of the quondam republic—are an endangered species. The Communists will bury him, the brain trusters jeer at him, a New York City psychiatrist wants to put him away (only a crazy man, the shrink reasons, could enjoy a middle-class life in dowdy Sachem Falls, New York). The country has passed to the likes of Fred's son, who dad thinks would "make a first-rate coat holder for some posthole digger on a WPA project that ain't started yet."

The Prodigal Parents contains more laughs per page than any of Lewis's post-*Babbitt* novels, but the author was roasted for its homely slant. Lewis had tipped his hand; the heretic had been a Main Streeter all along. He infuriated reviewers with passages such as this: "From Fred Cornplow's family, between B. C. 1937 and A. D. 1937, there came, despite an occasional aristocratic Byron or an infrequent proletarian John Bunyan, nearly all the medical researchers, the discoverers of better varieties of wheat, the poets, the builders, the singers, the captains of great ships. Sometimes his name has been pronounced Babbitt; sometimes it has been called Ben Franklin . . . He is the eternal bourgeois, the bourjoyce, the burgher, the Middle Class, whom the Bolsheviks hate and imitate, whom the English love and deprecate, and who is most of the population worth considering in France and Germany and these United States." (These independent freeholders—farmers, shopkeepers, printers—are the bulwark of Vermont's resistance to a fascist takeover in Lewis's crude cautionary novel *It Can't Happen Here*.)

After *The Prodigal Parents*, it was open season on Sinclair Lewis. His last novels, with the exception of *Cass Timberlane*, were anemic. Like Mencken, he was dismissed as a young radical grown crusty and conservative. *Main Street* and *Babbitt*, once wrongly praised as exposés of the barrenness of Middle America, were now condemned (by Mark Schorer) for "sugar-coating [the] loneliness, monotony, and boorishness" of small towns. The village atheist was discovered kneeling in the church, and for this sin of Main Street devotion he has never been forgiven.

To the end, Lewis stayed true to his time and his locality. He insisted, despite the naysaying of the folks who run things in this country, on the romance of the "Average Citizens of the United States." His crime, it seems, was that he *liked* them. He thought them funny and tragic and worthy of a lifetime's work.

In a preface to the ludicrous race novel *Kingsblood Royal* (1947), he wrote: "The Knights of the Crusade no more sang poetry about themselves than does my hero, the young banker of Grand Republic, Minnesota. It is only centuries later that the epic poet comes along and finds them elevated and given to speaking in blank verse . . . Some future Mr. Homer or Milton (born in North Dakota) . . . will make ringing heroic couplets out of him. The ring and the heroism are there all right, and I hope they are implicit in my own sardonic cataloguing."

Lewis was not the sophisticate mocking the bumpkins. (Compare his affectionate treatment of his fire-and-brimstone scoundrel Elmer Gantry with Mencken's vicious requiem for William Jennings Bryan.) Lewis loved the Bryans and the Babbitts, the Gantrys and the Kennicotts. He died alone in Italy in 1951, but the long arm of the small town reached out and brought him back to Sauk Centre, where he belonged. The funeral took place on a blustery day, and Sinclair Lewis's ashes were scattered, accidentally, all over his native ground. The prodigal son was home at last.

Novelist Bill Kauffman writes from Batavia, New York.

LIBERAL ARTS

LOOTER

"While going to work May 1 in downtown Los Angeles, I was approached by a man in his 50's. He was wearing a new suit with the tags still on it. The suit was at least five sizes too big. The sleeves on the jacket were rolled up along with the legs on the pants; a piece of rope held up the pants. He had on a new pair of Reebok shoes that didn't match.

"He asked me for some change to buy some food. I asked him, 'Did you spend all your money on your new suit and shoes?' With a smile he said, 'No, I'm a looter, and I got this new suit and shoes looting.'

"I then asked, 'What do you think of the Rodney King situation?' He looked at me questioningly and said, 'I don't follow sports anymore.'"

—from a letter to the L. A. Times *by Herb Sanders of Van Nuys, California.*

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Courage in Profile

by Paul Gottfried

Forbidden Ground: The Case Against Employment Discrimination Laws
by Richard A. Epstein
Cambridge: Harvard University Press; 544 pp., $39.95

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Like Richard A. Epstein's earlier book *Takings*, dealing with the defense of property in the Fifth Amendment, his latest one combines legal study and economic analysis with megadoses of political and social theory. Though Epstein explores, for the most part, civil rights legislation aimed at the removal of job discrimination, he devotes the opening section of his new study to refining Thomas Hobbes' arguments on the need for civil society. He cites Hobbes (albeit selectively) to demonstrate that government exists to protect life and property against those most prone to violence. He thereby reveals his lack of affinity for any view of the state as an instrument of social leveling or as a purveyor of "sensitivity."

Epstein offers especially withering criticism of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which makes it unlawful to discriminate in employment on the basis of race, religion, sex, or national origin. He also looks in depth at Supreme Court cases flowing out of the 1964 legislation, particularly *Greggs* v. *Duke Power Company* (1971) and *Wards Cove* v. *Antonio* (1989). While in the first case statistical evidence of a relatively low rate of promotion among black workers was used to infer objective discrimination, in the second the burden of proof was transferred to the collective plaintiff—the employees. Epstein contends that the Civil Rights Act itself is to blame for these shifting interpretations. Being unable to fathom fully the intentions or ratiocination of employers, judges have insisted on numerical results in dealing with charges of discrimination against officially designated victims of prejudice. Whereupon courts, facing countersuits (also under Title VII) from white males deprived of their just deserts, have reversed decisions mandating minority preference.

For Epstein, the Civil Rights Act and its sequelae are the inescapable outcome of judicial assaults on property rights beginning in the last century. The upholding of Jim Crow ordinances, as in the Supreme Court's separate-but-equal judgment in *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* (1896), infringed on the property rights of streetcar owners in Southern cities. Segregation laws and the failure of judges to protect Negro property rights in the post-Reconstruction South began a dramatic retreat from judicial defenses of private property anchored in both the Constitution and English Common Law. This change in judicial attitude became particularly pronounced after the arrival of a New Deal Supreme Court. Thereafter, courts made less and less effort to keep labor unions from controlling conditions of job entry, or legislatures from fixing wages and other work-place arrangements. Epstein sees these judicial failures to uphold the right of free contract between employers and employees as a movement away from an earlier Supreme Court stand, taken in *Lochner* v. *New York* in 1905. In *Lochner*, the Supreme Court had struck down a New York Stat ordinance limiting to 40 hours the permissible work week of bakers. Most of the justices in *Lochner* considered the offending ordinance as incompatible with the civil rights of those bakers who elected to work more than 40 hours per week, and of those employers who wished to retain them.

However laudable and ably argued is Epstein's case for property and contract rights, one can raise here a constitutional objection. Epstein's own appeal to judicial activism takes no account of the dual federalism upon which the American Republic was established. Indeed, Epstein sets out to make the liberal's favorite judicial device—incorporating selectively the Bill of Rights into the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment—a double-edged sword. If the Bill of Rights is no longer to be understood, as it was by John Marshall in *Barron* v. *Baltimore* (1833), as protecting the states and their citizens against federal (and particularly congressional) power, henceforth it should be made to justify new judicial incursions, carried out on behalf of property rights. This argument is already present and well-developed in Epstein's *Takings*, and it should be no source of comfort to defenders of states' rights. The *Lochner* decision, it can be argued, *unjustifiably* restricted the legislative power of states, even though conservatives and libertarians might both sympathize with Epstein's moral position that workers and employers should be allowed to determine their own economic relationships. Finally, what chance is there, pragmatically speaking, that the Incorporation Doctrine will be turned into a counter-revolutionary instrument? And even if Epstein does get his way (which is improbable) in overturning judicially all legislation directed against property rights, will this stop other judicial social engineering from going forward under still more radical interpretations of the Bill of Rights? Note that Epstein persists in making a case for activist judges at all levels, even while deploring the Civil Rights Act.

Epstein considers the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments as moves taken in a classical liberal direction. The 1866 act and the Reconstruction Amendments, he insists, addressed the questions of legal equality, Negro property rights, and equal access to public facilities. But surely this was not the only thrust of the post-Civil War racial legislation! The Fourteenth Amendment stripped millions of white Americans (and not only Southerners) of citizenship, if they could be shown to have aided the rebellion against the Union; the Fifteenth Amendment enfranchised a former slave population whose former owners had in many cases been reduced to outlaw status. Such legal developments seem far more relevant for understanding the true scope of Reconstruction than whether blacks were to have access to private as well as public facilities. Epstein is right to stress the essentially conservative nature of the predominantly Republican Supreme Court, which put a brake on Radical Republican legislation in 1874 and upheld states' rights positions in several key decisions. But then the Court was precisely that—a brake on a social and political revolution that many feared could not be confined to a militarily occupied South.

Despite these further reservations, let it be said that *Forbidden Ground* is a

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gold mine of arguments directed against the would-be eliminators of job discrimination. Epstein provides many reasons why discrimination in hiring is not the equivalent of racial slavery, or even of segregation. He correctly observes that an employer's preference for one labor pool over another does not leave the less favored applicants without other job options. The same employers might likely take their second-best choice as marginal workers. Applicants who have been rejected might also find employment with others who favor their distinguishing characteristics, a point that Thomas Sowell demonstrates in several studies on black and female academics. Sowell has proved statistically that both black and female teachers and professors were as much represented in the work force in the early 20th century as in that of the 1970's. The major difference concerned the institutions that were likely to employ them. Blacks and females had been predominantly associated with black and female institutions of learning in the past, but were less likely to be so in the present. What that indicates, however, was not the absence of economic opportunity or professional posts in the early 1900's, but the lack for many of what today would seem to be the most desirable prospects. Epstein does not believe that our already diminished property rights need to be further compromised for the sake of guaranteeing everyone a dream job. Needless to say, this guarantee is not now being made available to *quite* everyone; at least in the short run, only bureaucratically designated victims will be encouraged to pursue it.

I should finally compliment Professor Epstein for his willingness to consider the employer's right to discriminate in favor of compatible job applicants. There are certainly compelling economic and social reasons for hiring workers who are likely to get along with others in the same work force. Moreover, the imposition of minority quotas on employers creates an aura of suspicion about the politically preferred job recipient that must adversely affect his relationship with both employers and co-workers. Epstein is willing to defend a position that only the truly courageous will take these days: namely, that employers should be free to hire anyone they get along with. In a political world of social democrats separated only by different labels, he is a welcome anachronism, not exactly an old-fashioned conservative but at the very least a feisty classical liberal.

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Great Escapists

by Paul Hollander

The Flight From Truth: The Reign of Deceit in the Age of Information
by Jean-François Revel
New York: Random House; 408 pp., $25.00

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While M. Revel's critique of Western leftists and fellow travelers is fully shared by me, I part company with him when it comes to the issue of the durability of communist systems. Both he and I were among the vast number of observers and critics of such regimes who did not anticipate their spectacular and rapid disintegration. I am more than happy to admit that I was mistaken in attributing to them greater powers of survival than they actually possessed; M. Revel, however, is reluctant to do so. Even in the introduction to the English edition (which seeks to update the original published in France in 1988) some of his observations are dated: "the *political* system of communism . . . is extraordinarily resistant . . ."; "Moribund but incapable of dying communism seems able neither to cure itself nor to pass away"; "the fundamental principles of Soviet foreign policy under its new guise, remain the same." In fact, the most interesting question in analyzing these systems is what made them finally so fragile, despite their enormous concentration of political and economic power.

In *The Flight From Truth*, M. Revel continues the wholly laudable enterprise of exposing and criticizing Western misperceptions of communist systems and the left-liberal attitudes and biases of Western intellectuals (and quasi-intellectuals) with special reference to the media people. In doing so, he repeatedly expresses astonishment at the human tendency to resist information, the inability or unwillingness to draw the proper conclusions from available information, the capacity for self-deception, the displays of hypocrisy, and the stubborn attachment to outworn leftist ideas and ideologies. M. Revel is also a connoisseur of intellectual double standards, for which he provides impressive documentation. ("Two taboos joined forces to create the joint silence . . . the sempiternal fear of being taken for a reactionary in criticizing a so-called 'progressive' state and that of seeming to be a racist if one condemns the massacre of Africans by other Africans.") He also notes the cordial relations between UNESCO and the UN, and genocidal

LIBERAL ARTS

LESSONS FROM DOWN UNDER

As reported by the Federation for American Immigration Reform last May, Australia's minister for immigration, Gerry Hand, has announced that his country's immigration quota will be reduced next year to 80,000. In the 1980's Australia had the highest per capita immigrant intake, and in 1989-90 immigration totaled 170,000. When experts "warned that population would double every 40 years," the government reversed its pro-immigration policy and reduced intake to 111,000. Australian environmentalist Mark O'Connor said "the media and the public became convinced that high immigration was causing unemployment and increasing our foreign debt." The new quota will especially affect extended family reunification, "non-targeted skills," and immigrants without a proficiency in English. A spokesman for the political party Australians Against Further Immigration observed "there may be a moral in this for any U. S. and Canadian politician who wants to stay in office."

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Third World dictators such as Sekou Toure, Mengitsu, Macias, and the rulers of Rwanda and Burundi whose massacres failed to elicit moral indignation among otherwise protest-prone moralizing Westerners.

He attacks with particular relish Western "third worldism," and what he calls selective antiracism ("the only true racism . . . is white capitalist racism") and the variety of anti-Western attitudes in the West that survived the collapse and discreditation of communist systems and ideologies. He correctly observes that there is "nothing to suggest that leftists have managed to overcome the prejudice that grants to theoretically 'progressive' regimes a social immunity whereby they are simultaneously absolved of responsibility for any absence of democracy, disregard for human rights, and lack of food for their citizens."

He also demolishes the lingering false meanings and associations of "the Left" (though this had been done before by Edward Shils and others) and he correctly insists that although Western left-wing political parties are in decline, many of their ideas and beliefs survive. In other words, the adversary culture lives and continues to "project onto liberal societies the very defects [it] refuse[d] to discern in totalitarian societies."

American readers will be greatly interested to learn that parallels exist between the attitudes and behavior of alienated intellectuals in Western Europe and in the United States. If we have "multiculturalism," in French education a stubborn pro-Soviet and anti-capitalist bias persists. If the *charge* of racism is the ultimate moral delegitimation in this country, *frank discussion* of the problems of immigration from Third World countries is a corresponding taboo in Western Europe among the "liberal" intelligentsia.

Although the findings of this volume are not exactly new even when one compares the book with M. Revel's earlier work, they do usefully and importantly document attitudes and beliefs in an era when the collapse of communism may create an impression that these are things of the past. In fact, at the present time when dreamers of socialism confront the unraveling of its historical institutions, their disappointment only reinvigorates their hostility toward capitalism, Western culture, and political democracy. It remains to be seen how greatly their animus will affect the world in the decades to come.

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Conspiracy in the Caves

by Harold O.J. Brown

The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception
by Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh
New York: Summit Books;
268pp., $20.00

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From the time of their discovery in 1947, the "scrolls from the Dead Sea" have been a source of fascination, speculation, consternation, confusion, and, in the view of these two authors, a far-reaching religious conspiracy. *Deception* reads like a thriller, or the best of the many books on the assassination of President Kennedy. It is furnished with considerable documentation, which lends weight, or at least an appearance of weight, to its thesis. In the authors' view, the scrolls, properly and fully published and understood, would force a virtually total revision of the traditional historical understanding of the Palestinian sect known as the Essenes and, much more significantly, overthrow most of the historical data on which Christianity is built. The degree to which their thesis, if proved and accepted, would change our understanding of the origins of Christianity—and therefore, necessarily, of the truth of Christian doctrines—is similar to the degree to which the revisionists, who claim that the Nazi Holocaust of 1933-45 is a fiction, would change our understanding of those years.

The scrolls were discovered in 1947, during the last days of the British mandate in Palestine, and until the Six Days' War they were principally under Jordanian oversight in Arab-held Old Jerusalem. When news about their discovery began to spread, there was a burst of excitement at the prospect that they might destroy the historical basis for Christianity, and demonstrate that the Faith was just a variation on a preexistent Jewish sect. However, as their contents were released—selectively and slowly, as Baigent and Leigh point out—rather contrary results appeared. For example, the scrolls contained extensive material from precisely the books of Isaiah and Daniel that liberal biblical scholarship had argued were scissors-and-paste productions of a number of different writers. The scroll texts were virtually identical to the traditional Masoretic text of the Hebrew Scripture, and thus proved that the material of Isaiah, for example, had remained intact for almost a millennium between the date the scrolls were stored away and the oldest existing Hebrew manuscripts of the Masoretic text. This evidence lends weight to the traditional view that the Isaiah we have is a unified work going back to the great prophet of the seventh century before Christ.

The Dominican-sponsored *Ecole biblique* in Jerusalem, under its celebrated but extremely strong-willed if not tyrannical head, Father Roland deVaux, O. P. (1903-1973), quickly established a kind of monopoly on the publication and analysis of the scrolls from their discovery almost to the present. The thesis of Baigent and Leigh is that this monopoly was used with calculation, determination, and scholarly ruthlessness to prevent the truth about the origins of Christianity, which the scrolls would reveal, from coming out. The Roman Catholic Church, aided and abetted by numerous Protestant scholars, is the chief culprit.

Although Baigent and Leigh sound like journalists interested only in truth, it soon becomes apparent that they have some rather strong preconceptions. In their postscript, they claim that they are by no means likely to "'topple the Church,' or anything as apocalyptic as that. The Church today, after all, is less a religious than a social, cultural, political, and economic institution. Its stability and security rest on factors quite remote from the creed, the doctrine, and the dogma it promulgates. But some people, at any rate, may be prompted to wonder whether the Church—an institution so demonstrably lax, biased and unreliable in its own scholarship, its own version of its history and origins—should necessarily be deemed reliable and authoritative in its approach to such urgent contemporary matters as overpopulation, birth control, the status of women, and the celibacy of the clergy."

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The authors' basic thesis is this: the role of the Essenes, usually thought of as a pacifistic, celibate, monastic community, has been misunderstood and misinterpreted since the days of the Jewish historian turned Roman propagandist, Josephus. In reality they were both married and militant and were involved in the great revolts against Rome. Jesus himself may not have been a militant, but he was a zealot for the Law and was probably put to death, more or less legitimately, as a political troublemaker. The Apostle Paul was a kind of double agent, probably in Roman pay, and protected by the Romans from the Jewish religious authorities in a program similar to our government's witness protection plan. Nothing could be more evident to them than the fact that Paul totally transformed the program of Jesus into something that Jesus himself would have repudiated, making of him a divine Savior and eventually the incarnate Son of God.

Readers unfamiliar with the field may wonder at the fact that apparently virtually all of the scholars who have dealt with the scrolls share the consensus view, which Baigent and Leigh call a conspiracy to deceive. They rely rather heavily on the work of Professor Robert Eisenmann of California State University, Long Beach, and of the late J. M. Allegro. Eisenmann and Allegro have impressive credentials in Near Eastern studies, although Allegro gained the reputation of being a crank when he published *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross* in 1970. Baigent and Leigh make much of the fact that Allegro alone among the early investigators was not religiously committed, but was an agnostic. Does this make him less partisan than the Catholics? Allegro's death leaves Eisenmann as the chief surviving "iconoclast," and the only really scholarly witness for the authors' case.

In short, Baigent and Leigh write an impressive thriller. They plainly have a strong bias against the Roman Catholic Church, which plays the role of chief conspirator throughout. They present as assured fact certain things that are at the least debatable, such as the thesis that the Gospel writers and early Christians devised miracle stories to enable their Jesus to compete with Adonis and other Near Eastern savior-figures, or that Paul turned the teachings of Jesus upside down. When they subsequently find evidence of a massive pan-Christian conspiracy, with some Jewish complicity, to undergird their assertions, the resemblance to Oliver Stone's *JFK* becomes patent.

The Dead Sea Scrolls Deception is indeed fascinating reading. Fortunately for those of us who are not enthusiastic about having to throw out traditional Christian doctrines about the origins of the faith, the book includes enough internal evidence to make it plain that the authors' impartiality is at least as suspect as that of those they judge to have been conspirators. When Michael Drake of the *Belfast Telegraph* called it "a great detective story" on the dust jacket, he spoke well. It's a great story; but a story, not history.

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New Poetry From Italy

by Peter Russell

New Italian Poets
Edited by Dana Gioia and Michael Palma
Brownsville, Oregon: Story Line Press; 336 pp., $16.95

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Florence's *La Nazione*, a sober conservative daily with a national circulation and founded at the time of the American Civil War, stated on November 2, 1991, that more than 10 percent of Italians today are fully occupied in "organized crime" (not counting politicians and the legal profession). "Organized crime," in Italy, doesn't mean independent "self-employed" criminals, but is a term for the now dominant force in Italian society—the Mafia, the *'ndrangheta*, and the *camorra*. Only a year or so ago, the same newspaper published a statement by a leading judge who said the Mafia, etc., did not exist. Ten percent seems a modest proportion and surprises nobody. Are not 10 percent of the population bank workers, 10 percent accountants, 10 percent journalists or communications workers, or factory workers, and so on? All of this is quite normal and calls for no comment. But over the past thirty years a new profession has risen to prominence. At least 20 percent of Italians are *poets*. In Stefano Lanuzza's *Guida ai poeti italiani degli anni ottanta*, more than a thousand renowned poets are discussed, and that is only the *crème de la crème*. For years now people have been saying that, in Italy, there is a "boom" in poetry. The snag, as Lanuzza says, is that there are no readers. If you go into a bookstore and ask for poetry they will refer you to the schoolbook section, where you will find Dante (but rarely Petrarch), Leopardi, and—if you are lucky—Montale, but little else. Maybe too, an anthology of three hundred pages that will be used for the next sixty years to represent the whole of Italian literature.

But poetry is in the news. Poets are exhibited on the popular television programs, and every small town has its poetry festivals with prizes. The fact, of course, is that in a postindustrial, consumer age, anyone who has the will, the energy, the egoism, or simply the money to pay for a book to be printed, is a poet. Now, while I believe with all my heart that in every human being a poet is latent, I do not think that the mechanical process of reproduction is the thing that makes a poet. It is one thing to have poetic feelings, another to write a successful poem. It is one thing to imagine a comfortable pair of shoes, another to be able to make one. Poetry is a skill, a technique.

Dana Gioia's new and valuable anthology does not fall into any of these pitfalls. Mr. Gioia is one of America's most accomplished critics as well as an outstanding younger poet, and, as a good business executive, he knows just what he is doing. Out of a few hundred possible names he has chosen ten well-known ones, essentially "Establishment" figures. This book is worth its value in good old greenbacks for just Dana Gioia's introduction, let alone for the three hundred pages of contemporary poetry up to now not known in the United States. Anyone who has lived in Italy for nearly half a century, as I have, may raise his eyebrows at the inclusion of Maria Luisa Spaziani among "new Italian poets" (she's almost as old as I!), but in fact Gioia's selection of her is justified, for she is not as well-known as she ought to be. She is "new," not only to the American audience, but even to the

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general Italian public.

Gioia's introduction is especially valuable for its discussion of the difference between the Anglo-Saxon and Italian conceptions of poetry. English and Italian are two distinct languages, and the dictionary translations of the words are not sufficient to make the one intelligible to the other. The American (not to say the Briton) feels one way, the Italian quite differently. If the words correspond in the dictionary, this tells us little. Either you feel what they feel, or you don't. The words can come later; what is important is a prelinguistic experience.

Mr. Gioia lays great emphasis on "modernism" and is at pains to point out that in Italy, from 1908 and Marinetti until the Second World War, modernism held up as a vital movement. Where I would perhaps part company with Gioia is in feeling that modernism continued to be a dynamic enterprise after the war. Italians today still seem to be rehashing the earlier poetry of T. S. Eliot. But perhaps it is in the eschewing of genre, above all, that modernism manifests its essential weakness. "Genre," however old-fashioned a concept it may be, establishes a context. In many of the poems in this book it is exceedingly difficult to find a context, and the poems (and the readers) suffer as a consequence.

That these poems are precise and honest reactions to the conditions of modern life I do not dispute, but that they are effective as poems I altogether doubt. The poets of today seem to be puppets acted on by the adverse and negative conditions of a technological society and the heavy demands it makes on the individual. They all seem conscious of a hostile destiny, even of ruin. Their poetry seems limited to what Aristotle called *phantasia* and Pliny and Tacitus *imaginatio*, that is, merely the perception and reproduction of images, whether of things real or of mere fancies. There is nothing "creative" about the microcosms they present. Many of them are like short nondramatic sequences from some slightly pretentious film, rather than attempts to project an alternative macrocosm. The generations after 1963, when Italy entered the prosperity race, seem to be dedicated to denigration of the world their fathers (and mothers) have left them, without the smallest attempt to contribute anything positive to contemporary life. *Mi illudo / d'immenso* . . . In poetry I look for vision, creativity, myth, not little black boxes with cameras attached.

Certainly in the work of Maria Luisa Spaziani (born 1924) and in that of Umberto Piersanti (born 1941) there is a rich linguistic and metrical texture that is "poetic" in the traditional sense, but Spaziani often spoils the effect by a sort of verbal grinding of gears, and Piersanti, for all the fine flow of his diction, which is closer to D'Annunzio's or Swinburne's than to any living poet's, pays tribute to fashion by omitting all punctuation, so that it is impossible to construe the syntax of his long periods or even to distinguish one period from another. As for the other poets in this anthology, to quote Fabio Doplicher, "verse-builders / orient their radar in the bog of the ordinary." The language is ordinary and discursive, closer to prose than verse, referential rather than evocative. But then, that is what goes over today, whether in Italy, France, England, or the United States. Poetry has been semioticized and in the process has been virtually emptied of symbolism. But what I find most symptomatic not only in these ten very respectable poets, but in almost all contemporary poetry, is the deliberate shrinking of the context. One poem takes place entirely inside the shower bath, nothing outside the plastic curtain is even referred to. This is a praxis of exclusion. Poetry is an art of *in*clusion. There is (for me) neither pain nor joy in these not-so-new poets.

The translations are by a team of ten American Italianists. They are adequate and generally verbally close to the original texts, and so should be useful for students who already know some, but not enough, Italian. The diction, and the rhythm especially, are rarely of any distinction, and after all, it is rhythm more than anything else that communicates poetry and its inherent emotions. However, in one poem alone there are two howlers: in Spaziani's "White on White," "*le mie remote nebulose*" is translated "my remote nebulosities." This simply is wrong. It should be "my remote nebulas." The translator had no business attributing "remote nebulosities" to a distinguished intellectual such as Signora Spaziani. Equally reprehensible is "and you leave footprints on my heart lighter than a doe's," where "doe" is used for the Italian "*faina*," which un-

BRIEF MENTIONS

RESURRECTING MARX: THE ANALYTICAL MARXIST ON EXPLOITATION, FREEDOM, AND JUSTICE
by David Gordon
New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books; 160 pp., $29.95

If anyone thought the demise of the Soviet empire meant the death of Marxism, it is time to think again. To anyone with half a brain, the Soviet failures were manifest in Lenin's time, and any lingering doubts would have been dispelled by the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Of course, there was always Trotsky, the more ruthless alternative to Stalin, to appeal to the New York intellectuals who now lead the conservative movement, and when Stalin finally caught up with Trotsky in Mexico, there was always a new revolution or a new twist on the old formula, because Marxism's appeal never lay in its antiquated economics or its potted history, but in resentment: the resentment that outsiders always feel against insiders, immigrants against natives, intellectuals against the rich and successful.

If these truisms have any weight, then one key to Marxism's popularity must be its theory of exploitation. Predictably, it is exploitation that forms the nucleus for much of the "resurrected Marxism" that David Gordon reburies in his sober and trenchant analysis of G. A. Cohen, John Roemer, and Jon Elster, three contemporary writers who have attempted to translate Marxian clichés into the language of analytic philosophy.

One cannot do justice in a summary to Gordon's painstaking analysis, but in general the analytical Marxists regard the fact of one man selling his labor to another as exploitation, even if both buyer and seller are better off. As alternatives to capitalism, they offer various forms of market socialism of the type that are currently being repudiated in Scandinavia. But nothing succeeds like failure, and if the analytical Marxists cannot bring their fantasies to life in the real world, they will continue to work in the academy as building contractors specializing in castles in Spain.

—Thomas Fleming

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equivocally means a tree-martin. I often watch the seemingly weightless bounding of the *faina* from my bedroom window, but I would not like my heart to be trampled by a doe! Milo de Angelis's "*il riso in bianco*" (which as every Italian child knows means plain "boiled rice") becomes Lawrence Venuti's "laughter in white." I wonder how this translator would render Dante's "*Il dolce riso della mia donna*"? "My Lady's sweet risotto," perhaps? There are other dubious interpretations of the Italian, and the reader, unlike the translator in this case, should arm himself with a large dictionary.

As for the quality of the individual poets and their poems, to make brief judgments on them in a short review would be quite unfair and misleading. Readers may well judge them more favorably than I do.

Peter Russell is an English poet living in Italy and author of Teorie e Altre Liriche.

Of Men and Beasts

by Gregory McNamee

The Last Serious Thing: A Season at the Bullfights
by Bruce Schoenfeld
New York: Simon & Schuster;
238 pp., $22.00

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The old man has done a bit of everything that a journalist can do. He has been an opera critic, a war correspondent, a sportswriter. He prides himself most on the years he spent covering the bullfights of his native Sevilla. For some time now he has been mumbling to his American visitor, Bruce Schoenfeld, who recalls the old man "speaking Spanish with such a harsh and peculiar accent that I can't understand a word." He remains incomprehensible until he stands before a group of fellow enthusiasts of the ancient sport of tauromachy. Then, in a voice as clear as day, he declares, "There have been too many words written about bullfighting already. . . . The last thing we aficionados need is another [book]."

That may be true in Spain, where the shelves brim with titles on the *corrida*. But because the sport is not practiced in the United States, American writers have spent a little ink writing about bullfighting, and there is plenty of room for new books on the subject. At the apex of our small literature stands Ernest Hemingway's *Death in the Afternoon*, an indispensable consideration of the matador's art; then there yawns a great gap between it and a mound of lesser works, including the same writer's *Dangerous Summer* and the worshipful *Or I'll Dress You in Mourning*, by the team of Larry Collins and Dominique LaPierre. Bruce Schoenfeld's *The Last Serious Thing* occupies that hitherto empty middle ground.

Schoenfeld writes without pretense, fully aware that he will not equal Hemingway's great treatise. Instead, he gives us plain-vanilla reportage on the people involved in bullfighting, from spectators to breeders to picadors. Unlike Hemingway, he seems to take little interest in technique; on the face of it, Schoenfeld wouldn't know a *paso doble* from a *veronica*, although he surely does. What he has is a keen eye for everyday detail, and his book is as much about post-Franco Spain as it is about the ritualistic dispatch of infuriated beef.

Schoenfeld recounts a year's sojourn in Sevilla, "the city of the bull." (It is also a city where, as any visitor will remember, no local ever seems to work or sleep, where the *resaca*, the hangover, is a paid holiday. Rio de Janeiro seems dour by comparison.) In the ancient city Schoenfeld finds no end of memorable characters with which to populate his book. Among them are Juan Antonio Ruiz, "the only true *máxima figura* currently active in bullfighting today," who goes by the nickname Espartaco, or Spartacus; a slew of British and American expatriates who have collectively developed an encyclopedic knowledge of tauromachy past and present, to the consternation of turf-guarding Spaniards; and a retired *banderillero* called Navarrito, given even under the sternest years of Fascist rule to proclaiming his communist beliefs to the nearest policeman. Their stories, skillfully woven into the narrative, give real life to Schoenfeld's book.

Schoenfeld is equally good on what might be called the politics of bullfighting. He notes that in Spain, democratic only since 1975, many identify the sport with the bloody pomp of the Franco regime and so shun it; only when a few leading officials of the Socialist Party began showing up at ringside in the mid-1980's did the sport regain something of its former popularity. Like their grandparents, Spanish teenagers now accord matadors the same adulation as they do movie stars, pop musicians, and soccer pros, a nice bit of cultural continuity. Schoenfeld also notes the class-conditioned aspects of the *corrida*, where the poor entertain the rich, where "for every El Cordobés who gains financial security there are tens of thousands of aspirants who never see the inside of a bullring."

Animal-rights activists, who are presumably politically correct enough to allow for multicultural relativity, have long decried bullfighting, one of the planet's oldest sports. Schoenfeld seems to be neutral on the subject; he admits to neither a queasiness at the sight of spilled blood nor a sub-rosa thrill at the spectacle of sequined suits and flashing swords. Indeed, throughout the narrative he is curiously detached, and only the characters who wander in and out of his pages give them any sparkle. He reserves the final paragraph of his yeomanlike study to reveal any passion for the essence of the sport: "A human psyche laid bare, and the courage you need, in a plaza filled with thousands of people, to stand alone with yourself and the truest reality of all, the ubiquitous presence of death." Would that the rest of *The Last Serious Thing* had attained such poetry.

Freelance writer Gregory McNamee admits in certain company to enjoying a good bullfight.

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Letter From the Lower Right

by John Shelton Reed

Shall We Gather by the River?

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When I was invited last spring to be a judge at the Memphis in May World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest some envious backbiters put it about that it wasn't because I'm well-known as a discriminating *ami de swine*, but because my sister knows the woman who picks the judges. I have just one thing to say to them: Eat your heart out.

Naturally I jumped on the chance like a dog on a rib bone. Everyone knows that the annual Memphis contest offers not just some of the best 'cue in the world but a complete barbecultural experience. Last year, for instance, I heard that the festival drew entire platoons of Elvis impersonators, not to mention a contestant billing himself as "M. C. Hamhock" who promoted his product with a rap jingle:

> Don't need no knife, don't need
> no fork,
> Just wrap your lips around my
> pork.

So it was that I found myself winging over to Memphis one lovely Friday in May, eating American Airlines' peanuts and reading their copy of *Entertainment Weekly*, where I found a record review that began: "For many music fans north of the Mason-Dixon line, contemporary white Southern culture is nothing but an *Easy Rider* cliché of booze, bikes, and bad attitude." Yeeee-haw! In your face, Yankee music fans. Pig—sooey!

On the ground in Memphis, my sister and I walked down Beale Street toward the riverside park where the contest was being held, past the usual street vendors offering assorted Afro-schlock and Deadhead tie-dye. When we came to one selling plastic pig-snouts we knew we were getting close. Soon the unmistakable smell of hickory smoke assailed us and we rounded a bend into the park to behold one hundred and eighty-odd tents, booths, pavilions, kiosks, huts, gazebos, and God knows what all else, stretched out before us, literally on the riverbank, just a few feet from the mighty Mississippi. It was an amazing sight, its surreality heightened by daredevil youths bungee-jumping from a crane on the bluff above us and by the tract I was given as I entered the park, a handy guide to "What to Do in Case You Miss the Rapture." (Just a tip: if you take any marks or prints on your forehead or hands you'll be sorry.)

We wandered about, gaping. Some mom-and-pop operations made do with folding lawn chairs and simple funeral home tents, but other teams had assembled two- and three-story structures with latticework, decks, statuary, and hanging plants. Each team had a name—I'll spare you, but something about barbecue seems to provoke bad puns—and some also had mottos, like "Hogs smell better barbecued" and "We serve no swine before it's [*sic*] time." Portable generators powered everything from electric fans to fountains and neon signs, and over their constant drone mighty sound systems pumped out music, mostly country, Cajun, or rap, but I also caught the strains of the Village People's "YMCA."

Each team had a smoker, of course, and some had two or three. They ranged from backyard Weber pots to a tractor-trailer behemoth billed as the world's largest portable barbecue cooker; most, however, were roughly coffin-sized, some of them obviously off-the-rack, but many pieced together from 55-gallon drums and stovepipe. Any doubts that barbecue contests are serious business were dispelled by the trophies on display: some teams had more brass than the U. S. Army. And everywhere you looked you saw the pig-totem of the People of the Swine.

Now, for years I've kept a mental log of barbecue joint signs. I've seen pigs reclining, running, and dancing; pigs with bibs, with knives and forks, with crowns and scepters. I've seen pigs as beauty contest winners and pigs in cowboy hats, one with a banjo. I've seen Mr. and Mrs. Pig dressed for a night on the town, and Mr. and Mrs. Pig as American Gothic. But I've never seen pigs like I saw in Memphis. Pigs in chefs' hats and volunteer firemen's helmets. A pig in a Memphis State football uniform triumphant over some University of Tennessee pigs. A pig in a Superman suit rising from the flames. Lots of pigs drinking beer and, on the T-shirts of a team called the Rowdy Southern Swine, a whole trainload of partying pigs. A pig reclining in a skillet; another on a grill, drinking beer. Two pigs basting a little gnomish person on a spit. It's a hard call, but my favorite was probably some pigs with wings and halos, from a team called Hog Heaven.

This year Italy was being honored by the festival, so a number of teams struck what they took to be Italian notes. (I gather that last year's honoree, New Zealand, inspired mostly tasteless sheep jokes.) Some booths were decorated with hanging bunches of plastic grapes or simulated marble columns, and there were almost as many Italian flags as Confederate ones. T-shirts said "Ciao Down." And of course the pig-signs got into the act. Pigs ate pizza. Pigs wore handlebar mustaches. Pigs reclined in gondolas. Pigs stomped grapes. Pigs posed in gladiator gear and togas and Mafia outfits. A piece of doggerel posted in one booth combined the common themes of Italy, mortality, and beer:

> Arrivederci my pug-nosed pal
> We'll meet again at a different
> locale
> You in your mud, me drinking a
> Bud
> Way up in the final corral.

If any actual Italians were present to receive this hands-across-the-sea homage I didn't run into them, although I did meet some Swedes, who were there to see how a barbecue contest is run before starting one of their own (a scary thought). I was disappointed not to see a single Elvis impersonator. Not one. On the other hand there were, considering the season, very few politicians, and there were no street mimes at all.

In the 90-degree Memphis heat, female attire ran to haltertops and cutoffs, often decorated behind with stickers saying things like "HOT," "Can't Touch This," "Roman Hands," and "USDA

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Choice," lovingly applied to passing butts by freelance inspectors in pig noses. I couldn't help but think of a recent grim "feminist-vegetarian" monograph called *The Sexual Politics of Meat*. Dropped here by the banks of the Mississippi, its poor author would probably have been carried off gibbering. (Later I picked up a copy of *National Barbecue News* in which a columnist urged that those who suffer from HIV—high intake of vegetables—should be treated with compassion.)

Some men wore overalls, Western clothes, or biker gear, but most wore shorts and T-shirts, often revealing all too plainly what beer and barbecue can do to the male physique. Overdressed and hot in the khakis and seersucker I'd worn on the plane, I reflected that those of us from Back East have to uphold standards, but welcomed the frequent spritzes from the water guns of good-natured party animals.

At the judges' tent we encountered a man with rows of rib bones worn on his chest like decorations. Given the atrocious puns I'd already been subjected to, I didn't have to ask (rib bones=ribbons, get it?). He was dispensing barbecue wisdom like "Both the pork and the cook should be well-basted." I'll bet you say that to all the girls, I thought. My judicial duties wouldn't begin until the next day, so we set off to take in the showmanship competition.

"Showmanship" was judged on the basis of musical routines with barbecue and Italian themes, and most strong efforts seemed to come from teams of corporation or government agency employees who brought a sort of office party atmosphere to the proceedings. "White boys can't dance," my sister muttered, while we were watching one of these efforts. I reminded her that black ones probably couldn't either after drinking as much beer as these guys had. Shoot, they were doing pretty well to stand.

A group from Southern Bell presented a typical offering. Set in "Mama Bella's Pizzeria," it began with a grape-stomping number, followed by "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" ("They asked me how I knew / I'd be barbecue"), a fine "Barbara Ann" take-off ("You got me smokin' and a-grillin' / Sauce will be a-spillin' / Barbecue, bar bar, bar barbecue"), three girls singing "Where the Boars Are," and a mildly risqué send-up of an old Platters number ("Only you / Can be my barbecue"). At the end the whole cast joined in a dance number inspired by the idea of barbecue pizza. Inevitably, several other skits celebrated this concoction, which I gather is actually served as a regular thing at one Memphis restaurant. I ate some at the judges' reception and it's not quite as vile as it sounds.

Alas, the showmanship we saw was rather tame—nothing to match M. C. Hamhock. For genuine unglued weirdness we had to wait until that evening, when the featured act on the big stage turned out to be none other than my old Raleigh buddy the Reverend Billy C. Wirtz, down from Nashville where he moved last year to pursue his dream. An audience of several thousand rowdy Southern pork-eaters sat rapt as Billy regaled us with songs about truck-driving lesbians from outer space and other products of his off-center mind. After the show I introduced Billy to my sister, and he took us back to his van where he gave us each a bottle of snake oil.

The end to a perfect day. And the serious business of the contest—judging the pork—hadn't even begun.

Next month: *Judgment Day*.

John Shelton Reed writes from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where some of his best friends are vegetarians. Others are pigs.

Letter From Paris

by Curtis Cate

Grasshoppers and Ants

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Many American children who are brought up on Mother Goose stories, as well as other fairy tales, may not know that their author was a 17th-century Frenchman, Charles Perrault. They may also not realize that the fable of the melodious grasshopper (in actual fact a cicada) who whiles away the warm summer months in full-throated song, while the busy ant stocks up provisions for the bitter winter—so charmingly illustrated years ago by Walt Disney in one of his first "Silly Symphonies"—was the brainchild of another 17th-century Frenchman, Jean de La Fontaine.

This might seem a roundabout way of leading up to Edith Cresson—who was appointed French prime minister in May 1991 and then resigned after the Socialists' big defeat last March—but for the fact that it was she herself, an outspoken defender of French industrial interests, who used the famous simile to warn her overly nonchalant compatriots—implicitly likened to easygoing grasshoppers—about the looming threat posed, not only to France but to Western Europe as a whole, by the ant-like industriousness of the Japanese.

Many attempts have been made by commentators to explain why President Mitterrand ever chose in the first place a woman deputy to replace his enemy, Michel Rocard—an enemy because he long ago founded a Socialist Party splinter-group, dared prematurely to stake out his own presidential ambitions, and managed to survive three years in office with his popularity in public-opinion polls virtually undiminished (a feat no French premier has achieved since Georges Pompidou). If this gamble was intended to curry favor with feminine voters, who now outnumber French menfolk, it clearly failed. Edith Cresson—who had held the ministerial posts of Agriculture (1981-1983), Foreign Trade (1983-1986), and European Affairs (1988-1990)—was no Margaret Thatcher, and within weeks of her appointment her rating in the polls had sunk to a level unequaled by any of her predecessors. It was, furthermore, an act of rashness to pick a woman who once belonged to the presidential *serail* (seraglio), for this offered Jean Amadou, the witty scriptwriter, and his puppet-operating colleagues, a golden opportunity for mercilessly lampooning her past relations with her "*chou-chou*" and "*chéri*" (François Mitterrand) in Stéphane Collaro's *Bebête Show*, where she acquired the name of Amabotte (freely translated—the Boot-Licker) and was presented to television viewers in the guise of a fawning, doll-like creature, ever ready to drool at the mouth in the presence of her god and master.

I must confess that, notwithstanding her *parler cru* (crude talk) and certain unnecessary lapses—such as suggesting that one Englishman in every four is a "pansy"—I felt a lurking sympathy for Edith Cresson. For regardless of the Socialist François Mitterrand might have chosen to succeed Michel Rocard, he or she would have faced the same daunting problems and the same social unrest.

There are a number of reasons for

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France's present economic plight, of which I will simply pick out three. The first has been the increasingly glaring discrepancy between what French manufacturing industry needs and what a hopelessly sclerotic, monstrously bureaucratized, and centrally controlled educational system is able to provide. To cite but one example: the Peugeot automobile company, run by Jacques Calvet—the very prototype of the capitalist magnate most French Socialists abhor, but who had been one of Edith Cresson's firmest supporters in demanding measures to dam the inrushing tide of Japanese manufactured goods—needed a full year to recruit the 1,500 engineers and qualified technicians needed to operate an ultramodern plant it recently opened at Poissy, northwest of Paris. At the present time some 14,000 engineers are graduated every year in France, when at least 25,000 are needed—among other things to manufacture and control the robots increasingly used in many fields of production. (A year and a half ago, in an eye-opening article published in *Figaro*, one of France's most persistent modernists, Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, was already sounding the alarm, pointing out that Japan's manufacturing supremacy was due in no small part to the awesome fact that it had 175,000 robots in operation, compared to a mere 35,000 for all of Europe.)

Another root cause of France's present industrial woes has been a built-in system of job security that has remained virtually unchanged since the immediate postwar years. During that period, which began with General de Gaulle's 16-month premiership (September 1944-January 1946), when the French railways, the steel and coal industry, and five leading banks were nationalized, the main aim of social policy was to assure each French working man and woman guaranteed stability of employment. This proclaimed objective of "justice for the worker" was naturally championed by the communists, who for a dozen years controlled 25 percent of the vote, and for similar ideological reasons by the Socialists, who formed one of the three supporting pillars of the short-lived coalition governments that were formed and that kept collapsing right up until the end of the Fourth Republic.

In 1958, when Charles de Gaulle returned to power, first as premier, then as president of the republic, he chose a conservative, Antoine Pinay, to be his finance minister. But Pinay, one of the most underrated French politicians of modern times, did not share De Gaulle's anti-Anglo-Saxon and anti-NATO prejudices or the General's addiction to prestige politics, and after 18 months in office he resigned. His place was taken by a brilliant graduate of the École Polytechnique (roughly speaking, the equivalent of our M. I. T.), Válery Giscard d'Estaing, an ardent *dirigiste* who invented the pernicious Value Added Tax (a boon for finance ministries but a bookkeeping nightmare for shopkeepers and entrepreneurs) and who was an ambitious and often demagogic opportunist with one eye trained on the presidency.

It can be argued that, even if France had been fortunate enough to have a Ludwig Erhard to free its economy from the shackles of state control, it would not have made that much difference, given the unimaginative stodginess of many French entrepreneurs and the lack of worker discipline in a country that has no less than four major labor confederations and where today only one worker in every ten actually belongs to a union. But what is undeniable is that under the successive presidencies of Georges Pompidou (1969-1974), Válery Giscard d'Estaing (1974-1981), and for the first five years of François Mitterrand's presidential term, the credo of job security remained an "untouchable," a sacred cow. This meant, in practice, that no entrepreneur wishing to expand his operations could hire a worker or an employee and then decide to fire him or her at short notice for laziness or incompetence without having to pay exorbitant amounts of compensation according to complicated stipulations prescribed by the state. For big concerns possessing large capital resources or partly financed by the state, the indemnities having to be paid out for the laying-off of workers have never posed a major problem, but they have had a disastrously inhibiting effect on the managers of medium and small companies in a country where two out of every three newly formed enterprises founder before the end of the third year.

It would of course be expecting too much of a Socialist government to grasp a nettle of this kind. But in 1986, when a conservative coalition led by Jacques Chirac toppled the Socialist government of Laurent Fabius, the moment seemed to have arrived at last for a wholesale dismantling of the complex fiscal restrictions and taxes that had long been crippling medium and small enterprises (most of which in France employ from 1 to 500 workers). Jean-Marie Benoist, who at the time was the self-appointed "philosopher" of the Chiracian "renaissance," advocated the launching of an all-out offensive, employing the Napoleonic language of "one hundred days" as the limited time available for making decisive breakthroughs on the legislative front before the powers of inertia regained the upper hand. Unfortunately, his "strongman" idol turned out to have feet of clay; for Jacques Chirac, like his successor, Michel Rocard, is a typical product of the École Nationale d'Administration, where future "public servants" (including many politicians) were until recently trained in an emphatically *dirigiste* atmosphere. Faced by the prospect of tens and perhaps of hundreds of thousands of workers taking to the streets behind their left-wing rabble-rousers to uphold the sacrosanct "right to work," Chirac's courage failed him, and the Napoleonic "offensive" bogged down in the usual morass of interminable negotiations.

It has been calculated that if French managers of medium and small enterprises (roughly one and a half million strong and comprising 63 percent of the labor force in the un-nationalized industrial, commercial, and service sectors) were freed of their present fiscal and other shackles, an unfettered freedom to hire and dismiss workers could produce as many as 500,000 new jobs—in a country where the level of unemployment is now approaching the three million mark. Such predictions are necessarily speculative. What is certain is that whereas from 1979 to 1988, major French industrial concerns, in a "streamlining" campaign aimed at making them more efficient and better able to withstand foreign competition, had to lay off 870,000 workers and employees, France's medium and small enterprises managed to create 450,000 new jobs.

Due credit must be given to Edith Cresson for having tried to reverse the tendency of previous governments to favor big industrial concerns. "Small is beautiful" was the caption chosen by the editors of the weekly *Le Point* for her photograph last September, when she came out with a program of 19 specific measures intended to help medium and small enterprises—but which, pre-

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dictably, fell short of what is needed.

A third, less technical, cause has to do with lifestyles and a general attitude toward work. Some years ago an economist friend of mine, Guy Lambert, who had a passion for drawing up comparative charts of working productivity, told me that by the mid-1980's in France the average employed man or woman only worked one day in every two (roughly 185 days in the year). His calculations took into account two-day weekends, a full month of paid vacations (for which most French workers and employees actually receive five weeks of pay), religious and other holidays of one kind or another, and work days lost through strikes, absenteeism, and an overindulgence in what is verily a national passion with this nation of disgruntled *rouspéteurs* (gripers)—street demonstrations.

Guy Lambert was not exaggerating. In 1987 a French businessman, Victor Scherrer, devoted an entire book to the subject, giving it the arresting title, *La France paresseuse* (Lazy France). It was panned by "serious" economists because the evidence produced was too selective. Yet recent statistical studies indicate that the average French factory worker or office employee now puts in about 1,550 hours of work in the year. If we subtract the four annual vacation weeks (reducing the yearly total to 48), this gives us a working week of just over 32 hours. The Japanese, on the other hand, put in 2,000, and even 2,200 hours (including overtime) in the year—which, again allowing for four vacation weeks, amounts to a working week varying from 42 to 46 hours.

In a radio interview given last November, Daniel Goeudevert, a dynamic French businessman who now heads the giant Volkswagen works in Germany, defended his company's recent decision to raise its workers' wages by 6 percent on the grounds that a farsighted management is the one that anticipates labor demands before they degenerate into a strike, which "is always a catastrophe." Over the past ten years, he added, the Volkswagen company had not lost a single working day through strikes.

It is, of course, unrealistic to expect a nation of highly individualistic *rouspéteurs* to behave like disciplined Teutons. But the cruel facts are there—offering food for sober reflection for every French working man and woman, as well as for the demagogues who rule them.

Personally, I can't help thinking that Western Germany's *Wirtschaftswunder* can be explained in part by the fact that many German offices open for business at 8 a.m., as is the case in Switzerland. For it is by no means certain that the extra time "gained" by fixing the closing hour at 6 p.m.—the current practice in France—makes up for the lost hour in the morning, since many Parisian employees (I can't vouch for others) begin their evening dash for the subway or the bus at 5:30 or even earlier.

My suspicions are also confirmed by what has happened in Switzerland and in the neighboring Franche-Comté and Jura mountain regions of southeastern France. In the late 1970's and early 1980's the Swiss came perilously close to seeing their watch industry destroyed—like the camera industry in Germany—by the mass production of cheap Japanese timepieces. But the Swiss, being a hardy folk, and in this case more resolute than the drowsing beer-swillers of Hessen and Franconia, pulled up their socks, tightened their belts, fired more than 55,000 redundant employees, and managed to rescue a traditional industry, in which one thousand small enterprises nevertheless went under. Today Japan leads the world with an annual output of 325 million watches, followed by Hong Kong, with an annual output of 180 million. Switzerland, with only 81 million, seems to lag far behind. In *numbers* of quartz-operated timepieces, yes, but in terms of *money earnings* derived from top-quality production, Switzerland still leads the international field—with a turnover in 1990 of 7.3 billion Swiss francs, or 55 percent of the world total.

France—if we exclude the huge *terrae incognitae* of Russia and China—is in fourth place, with 23 million watches, well ahead of Germany, in fifth place with 3.7 million. The hardy inhabitants of the Franche-Comté and the Jura mountains—an often cold and foggy region where France's watch and clock makers have traditionally lived and labored—saw the handwriting on the wall and learned the hard way how to make high-quality watches with two hundred skilled artisans, where previously five hundred had been employed. But whether the *cigales* inhabiting the warmer regions of France will be prepared to limit their summer singing in time to meet the autumn chill of future years remains to be seen. It will require a psychological metamorphosis which neither the slick manipulations of that sleight-of-hand magician, François Mitterrand, nor the tough talk of his chosen handmaidens are likely to bring about.

Curtis Cate is a biographer and historian living in France.

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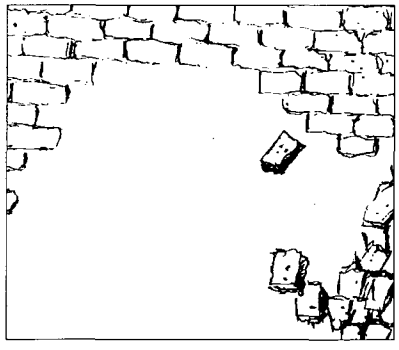

BLOCKING ROADBLOCKS

The roadblocks police use to stop all drivers in order to catch drunk drivers are unconstitutional in Michigan, reported the *Wall Street Journal* last April. An intermediate appellate court ruled that such roadblocks violate "the state's constitution and the traditional practice of law enforcement," and that "police can only search a car if the individual driver shows signs of being drunk."

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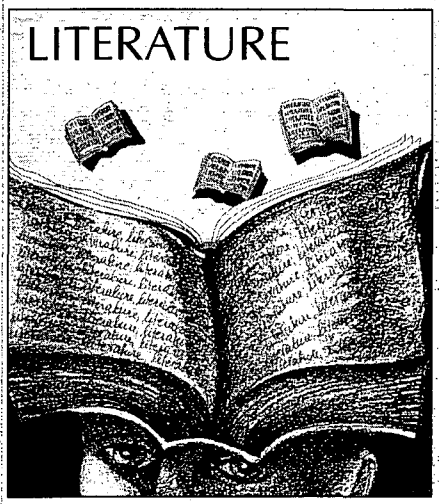

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Politics in American Letters

by Larry Woiwode

Remembering Dos Passos

The following was presented in acceptance of the John Dos Passos Prize for Literature, presented at Longwood College, Farmville, Virginia, September 20, 1991. The Dos Passos Prize is awarded to a writer in mid-career for a distinguished body of work; previous recipients include Graham Greene, Paule Marshall, Robert Stone, and Tom Wolfe.

* * *

When a writer accepts a literary prize, the writer should not, like Lear's daughters, be insufficiently grateful, nor so enamored of accolade that, like the tetrarch Herod, he's immediately consumed by worms. Nor should a writer on these occasions forget friends and colleagues who have labored without notice over the years, or who have received a good degree of notice but remained unlaureled, at least partly for reasons I hope to address. And so, since it would be redundant and unmannerly to present a case for my own work on this occasion, I would like to speak for those disenfranchised others as I offer some reflections on the writer after whom the Dos Passos Prize is named and on this dark time in American letters.

Whatever our feelings about the fictional techniques of Dos Passos, we have to view them as elements of a larger, individual vision rather than novelties. Mere novelty, Samuel Johnson says somewhere, thumping the table to wake Boswell up, is ignorance. Dos Passos' techniques by now have been absorbed into the mainstream of American writing and their effects can be seen in writers as diverse as Brooks, Capote, Doctorow, Isherwood, Oates, and both Tom Wolfes. What the "newsreel" or "headline" technique or "I am a camera" mode brought to modern writing was a sense of immediate engagement with the existing world.

There is the imperial trend in modernism, present in Joyce, Pound, Stein, Woolf, and others, that threatens to refine away the dirty world and its workings into artful constructs of language. The jolt of Dos Passos' work, arriving at the time that it did, served as a corrective to that, and had the effect of keeping modern fiction, as well as other genres of modern writing, more earthbound and mundane, and thus more honest. Honesty, along with the intellectual vigor necessary to sustain it, is indeed the hallmark of Dos Passos' writing and lived life.

He observed that in the United States, in the latter part of the 20th century, it is the art of politics, not the humanities or the arts, that governs everyday life. This seems on the surface a dark conclusion, and it is no secret that Dos Passos is at least as well-known for his sociopolitical views as for his literary techniques. In proper publishing circles, in fact, it is possible to hear his views dismissed in one word: conservative.

Dos Passos' brand of conservatism is identical to the conservatism of the writers of the U. S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. He did not want individual liberties to be infringed upon, and he began his career cherishing the views we now find enshrined at PEN—the acronym for that political congregation of poets, essayists, and novelists. Dos Passos did not become crystallized in his thought, however, or isolated within an "artistic" community. He began to write his way toward an alternate outlook that offered, as he saw it, the most humane and reasonable solutions to the social problems confronting Americans. He had not found such solutions in the socialism he once espoused, as the Eastern bloc of the world lately has not.

It takes not only intellectual vigor but courage to alter one's views, particularly when it means going against the grain, and this Dos Passos did, putting up with dismissal by critics and the academy—even the loss of old friends, such as Hemingway. He was scorned in the same way and for the same reasons that one of the most courageous and profound figures of the last half of the 20th century, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, was scorned in America during its liberal 70's—for his politically incorrect views.

It doesn't matter that the words of both have proven prophetic; their views did not and do not mesh with the views in ascendance within America's literary-publishing complex, the academy, or the extended media. If the humane arts (rather than the military or martial or other arts) have less and less governance over our attitudes, as they do, it is because those arts are more and more governed by internal politics.

This was what Dos Passos' warnings were about.

The quality or relevance of literary work nowadays can be less important than the views expressed in it or the people you know. And just as bad or worse (it's difficult to judge with the dark growing darker) is the academy's refusal to carry on discourse with ideologies or views alien to its entrenched Marxist-humanism (no oxymoron that), and the reluctance of the literary-publishing complex to take note of, much less put into print or support, the work of anyone whose views are not quite correct.

If anyone is unsure of what I'm saying, I'll say it more openly, because the

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attitude that needs to be identified has made its way from the literary arena to grant-giving foundations to the media, and from the best universities and colleges into every branch of public education: it is the attitude that says I must agree with the prevailing view, or adhere to its theories and politics and agenda, in order to be properly acceptable, if acceptable at all. This attitude is, in substance, intolerant; it is prejudicial, and suggests the beginning of a new era of cultural imperialism. What is taking place in literary and academic circles as a matter of course is exactly what Dos Passos warned against and feared. It would not be prudent of me to accept an award that bears his name, I feel, without a reminder of what he stood for, on behalf of those disenfranchised others who have no forum, due to the present-day, exclusionary trend that is undermining American letters.

Novelist Larry Woiwode writes from Mott, North Dakota.

The Year in the Novel

David R. Slavitt

1991

What we have here—not even the President has had the effrontery to deny it—is an intellectual recession. I cannot think of a year in which more bad books received more serious attention. These weren't just lapses but a pattern, and one need not be paranoid to look for explanations. What people do is, mostly, what they want to do and intend to have done. And if the nonbook has been promoted to a new eminence, there must be some significant intention, however malign.

What we're talking about are the big books of the season—Norman Mailer's *Harlot's Ghost* (Random House), Harold Brodkey's *The Runaway Soul* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux), and, in a slightly different and more traditional vein, Alexandra Ripley's *Scarlett* (Warner). I find myself in the bizarre position of having not only to admit but having to boast that I haven't read them. Anyone dopey enough to slog all the way through these novels isn't smart enough to write intelligently about them. I've dipped and skimmed, browsed and sniffed, and held my not-so-delicate nose (in my needier years, I committed some best-sellers myself in order to keep my children's rapacious bursars at bay). It was ridiculous, not just a matter of three random disasters but a conspiracy of discontented, misanthropic, dyspeptic crazies in New York who are trying to get back at literature itself for having betrayed them. These are English majors, most of them, who know nothing about literature or business and who find themselves working for much less than they would be making in any other industry (if, indeed, they were employable in any other industry). And they hate it, hate the books, and hate the readers, and want to get even, which they contrive to do by forcing down the gullets of a retching public these scabrous libroid monstrosities.

These volumes are printed in large numbers, shipped, reviewed, sold, displayed on shelves and coffee tables, but never (one supposes, or one hopes) actually read. My guess is the breakthrough title was Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, which proved, almost ten years ago, that one could sell vast quantities of a volume nobody would read—because nobody could. This was a text about 10 percent in Latin, and most readers in this Jacobin society have only the loosest grip on English. But the concept was enticing—the display book, the unreadable book, the book as a pure piece of merchandising rather than literature. Indeed the worse a book is as literature, the better and purer it is as an act of merchandising.

This perversity is not new but seems to have reached a new intensity last year. And Mailer and Brodkey are the appropriate heroes of this antiliterary ecstasy. Mailer for years has been doing a kind of Mexican hat dance on the broad brim of his talent, as if to invite us to share the joke he has learned to be amused by—that it is absurd to be gifted in a time when nobody notices gifts, and quality counts for nothing or can't be distinguished from arrant fakery and trumpery. He will then, sometimes ruefully and sometimes with ebullience, devote his talent to foolishness and fatuousness, thus reclaiming the initiative from his operating editor, Jason Epstein, and making the game his own.

Brodkey, meanwhile, seems to be an invention of the *New Yorker* on the one hand and Gordon Lish on the other, and has been running an amazing scam, claiming to have been working on this book for 27 years! (Wonderful! Excellent! Superb! One more year, and he'd have doubled Flaubert's stint on *Madame Bovary*!) Just think what it would mean for the literary world if all authors took this long to spin out their sentences. There'd be so much less on the table. John Updike, Joyce Carol Oates, and their like just don't get it—that people don't like to read, find it a good deal of work to get through one book, let alone a slew of them, and rather resent it when they are put in the dreadful position of turning pages as fast as they possibly can and nevertheless falling perceptibly behind.

The *New York Times Book Review* has figured this out and proclaims the message in a not-so-subtle way almost every Sunday with a bottom-half-of-the-first-page essay, which is *not* a book review and which therefore doesn't even put us at risk of having to read yet another thick, fat, square book. The subjects of these essays are often revealing: "Books I've Never Finished" or "Writer's Block." If there were more writer's block, think how much less time we'd have to spend reading those books, after all.

Brodkey is probably the champion blocked writer. Past 60 now, he has made a career—and a living—with this book in progress, which is of course the best place for a book to be, for once it is down on paper, the editors' dreams for any literary work begin to come undone. It isn't a piece of high art that will sell a jillion copies and then move to the backlist and do well in university survey courses forever, but merely another title, a commodity like any other that one must pitch to the sales force, send out to unappreciative reviewers, and then try to sell to a fickle and anyway dense public. The dream book is the "supreme fiction" of Wallace Stevens' title. It is not embarrassed by any advance orders from which to figure a first print run, and there isn't an advertising and publicity budget that seems not only un-dreamlike but actually constrained. Unwritten books are the ones the industry lives on, by, and for.

But after 27 years of throat clearing, even a Brodkey must turn in something to someone, because there are only so many excuses, postures, and dodges with

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which to put off editors who have authorized checks and are responsible to corporate executives. The CEOs, who may be pleased to list these oneiric assets but object after a time to the paying of so much interest, aren't Milkens or Keatings after all—which is not exactly a compliment: they're no more scrupulous but lack the nerve, the sheer brashness of those pirates.

So I'm all for Brodkey for taking publishers to the cleaners for as much as possible and as long as possible. It's only that eventually even he had to hand in a manuscript. And they get (and we get in turn) this . . . first novel actually, a vastly pretentious and even more vastly boring, tiresome, all but incoherent hodgepodge that gets respectful treatment in the *New York Times Book Review*, and prominent space in the *New York Review of Books* and the *Times Literary Supplement*. In the *New York Review*, Brodkey is on page three with a David Levine caricature—the other caricatures in the issue are Jacques Derrida, Nadine Gordimer and Adrienne Rich, and Alexander Hamilton. That's fairly grand treatment for what seems essentially a prank, a demonstration that taste is dead and intelligence has turned upon itself, that, with a sufficiently intimidating headwaiter, one can serve up whale slunk, pass it off as milk-fed veal, and get away with it.

Indeed, the outrageous unreadability of the book is probably a part of its success—the notion being that art isn't merely entertaining but ought to uplift, ought to be serious, difficult, and, not to put too fine a point on it, boring. If it feels bad enough, it must be—like church, medicine, or aerobic exercise—good for you. Thus, in a review in the TLS that turns out to be finally unfavorable, Gabriel Jospovici feels obliged to register his credentials by making comparisons, or invocations, or allusions to "the greatest modernist novels, from *A la recherche du temps perdu* to Perec's *La vie, mode d'emploi* and Yaakov Shabtai's *Past Continuous*," which he says "have found a means of sailing between the Scylla of plot and the Charybdis of total plotlessness."

Is it necessary to trot out all that just to say that in these 835 pages, there isn't any basic narrative? What we have here is the collected outtakes from Brodkey's short stories and has to do one way or another with the same Brodkey-like figure, a poor orphaned boy who goes to Harvard, discovers women, but then finds out that there's also literature to screw around with. To suggest that this is an almost incoherent, mostly maundering, often even ungrammatical book ought not be so intimidating that a reviewer feels the need to gird himself up, get defensive, and allude to Perec and Shabtai to let us know that he was, in the first grade, in the bluebird group of fast readers and is still pretty good at it.

The only other interesting thing to remark about *The Runaway Soul* is its runaway price—it is the second novel in the history of American publishing to come out with a list price of thirty dollars. The first, only a few weeks earlier, was, naturally enough, Norman Mailer's *Harlot's Ghost*. This was noted on the business news pages of the *Times*, which is where the project ought properly to be discussed. Mailer's book and Brodkey's have a lot in common, actually, for Mailer's novel is also big, dopey, but grandly ambitious, and clearly IMPORTANT. It is so big that it doesn't even end but only indicates that this is "To Be Continued," which is more of a threat, I think, than a promise. It's so big that nobody at Random House had either the nerve or the energy to edit any of it. There is a dangling participle in the first sentence that would not pass muster in the bonehead composition course of any cow college, and, for the rest of the long way, we get paragraphs that start out with first person pronouns and wander distractedly through syntactical thickets to end up astonishingly in the second person.

We might expect of a large novel about the CIA a certain degree of political savvy, some historical background, a sense of what has been going on in the world. If Gore Vidal had written such a book, a good part of the fun of it would have been in his impish suggestions about which country did what and to whom and for what reason. Indeed, if John le Carré had written such a book, we'd have at the very least mordant entertainment about the psychological tribulations of spying and the philosophical stresses of the bad faith that spies not only encounter but are required to enact, themselves. These are ambitions that Mailer doesn't condescend to acknowledge, let alone fulfill. What he gives us is a father-son story, an Oedipal farrago onto which he grafts his own peculiar (one might also say, loony) metapsychology of the yin and yang of things that he labels "alpha" and "omega."

It isn't all dreadful. There are pages, even whole scenes here and there, in which Mailer's tendentious silliness disappears because he has latched onto some piece of action too good to let go, and where his craftsmanly experience takes him onto firm narrative ground in spite of the arrant dumbness of the book's grand strategy. I found these passages not only not redemptive but actually distressing, for I took them as evidence of what our novelist could have been doing had he any shred left of the modesty and humor that keep most writers from making fools of themselves.

The trouble is that Mailer is smart enough to have understood that his real relation with his audience has nothing to do with his writing. He can produce a good book like *Executioner's Song*, or a windy and insane one like *Ancient Evenings*, and it makes no difference at all. He gets the same media attention either way, achieves the same impressive sales, and thus for his next book can command the same hefty advances. At the end of last year, some 185,000 copies of *Harlot's Ghost* had been shipped, and the newspapers were reporting that Random House, although indifferent to the content of the novel, had been much concerned about its cover. The core beliefs of publishing are diametrically opposite to those most of us hold. Lightning always strikes in the same place, they assume, and one should always judge a book by its cover. Therefore, the rather handsome, dark gray dust jacket with "CIA" as an overall design and the author's name and the title in striking embossed white letters was judged by the merchandisers as too somber. Another jacket in raspberry was whipped up for the Christmas season in the hope of greater sales.

There is no room for any gloss on this, and surely no need for one. But I am reminded of the observation of an old teacher of mine who lives in Washington and finds it depressing to see, each year, another generation of bright young men and women arrive from colleges and graduate schools, all of them filled with some degree of idealism and the wish to do good. They are socialized, however, by the bureaucratic system and learn—in the State Department, the Justice Department, or wherever else—not to take any initiative, never to incur risks, never to follow their

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instincts but always to implement the policies of higher-ups—until their naive but precious idealism has been finally extinguished and it is too late for them to dream about doing anything that may have consequences for good in the world.

Well, it happens in publishing, too, evidently. The love of literature that drew these young men and women to be English majors has to be killed before they can be trusted to run even modest amounts of capital. Hard lessons must be learned about quality counting for nothing. They must be made to realize that this is a business, a series of feats of merchandising, a kind of fraud practiced upon a public that deserves nothing better because it demands nothing better.

Which leads us, at last, to *Scarlett*, the other big book of the fall 1991 season. Or big nonbook, one might better say, an expensive rehash of the lower-middlebrow nonsense of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*. That was—let us not kid ourselves—a more or less stupid exercise, a feminist tract *avant la lettre* with a predictably romantic setting in the South of the Civil War and the Reconstruction period. The film was rather better than the book, mostly because Clark Cable and Vivian Leigh and Trevor Howard imposed their personalities on it and gave it a schlocky sheen—so that this sequel, once the Mitchell heirs could be brought round, was an attractive, or at least economically viable, proposition.

The book is not readable, is even duller and more mawkish than Mitchell's, and seems to be rather prudish. (The estate, in a high-minded way, wanted to protect the "property" from vulgarization and insisted that there be no explicit sexuality in the sequel, as if there had been no changes at all in public taste and standards since the 1930's. These restrictions only guaranteed a different and more serious kind of vulgarity.) But to talk about the text of the novel is entirely to miss the point. The publishers knew quite well that literary quality was irrelevant, and that the writing and editing were merely preliminary chores annoyingly prerequisite to the real business of selling books and subsidiary rights. I am reliably informed that the editor, a bright young woman sent down by Warner for the first look at Ms. Ripley's manuscript, had a good dinner and a night's rest, and then, in the morning, was left alone for some hours with the manuscript and a pot of coffee. When she got up to stretch and take a turn around the garden, she was asked what she thought, and her reaction, after the first couple of hundred typescript pages, was: "It's very Southern."

It turned out that she had never actually read *Gone with the Wind*. She had not seen the film either. She had no clear idea, then, what she was looking at. But never mind. The book sold a record number of copies in its first month in the stores, and producer Robert Halmi in partnership with CBS put up $8 million for the film rights. An all-time record, even making allowances for inflation. Not only was *Scarlett* the number one title on the best-seller list, it even dragged Margaret Mitchell's old book back onto the hardcover list (at $21.95) and onto the paperback list too (at $5.99). It is therefore difficult to try to maintain that these cynics in publishing are wrong. All one can do is gnash one's teeth and mutter how they are all villains, churls, fools, knaves, rogues, swine, dogs, vermin . . .

And if they knew writers and readers were doing this? They would delight, exulting and enjoying every moment of what they would take as an acknowledgment of their triumph—because, as I have suggested, they detest their own old and foolish notions about quality. They understand that publishing is a business, that in the marketplace of ideas, ideas are the last things that readers can bear. On a best-seller list toward the close of the year, *Scarlett* was followed by a Stephen King horror story, a Tom Clancy high-tech novel, a Ken Follett suspense story, a Dick Francis horse story, a couple of novels by Sidney Sheldon and Barbara Taylor Bradford, and then an Anne McCaffrey science-fiction work in the "Dragonriders of Pern" series. What claptrap! What a monumental disgrace! It is a triumph of kitsch over art, of the *demos* over the *aristoi*. If we do not see this as an indictment of the folly of free, universal, compulsory education, it is at the least a mordant demonstration of entropy in the sphere of culture. The minions of these publishing houses learn to delight in their ability to manipulate such offenses against good taste to produce, from time to time, impressive results on the real books—which are those the accountants keep. There has to be a perverse delight these editors take in what they're doing, a kind of blithe nihilism or a literary *Schadenfreude*.

Real publishing, what little there is left, is mostly by inadvertence—good books young editors sneak through on small budgets—or is elsewhere, out in the sticks where the little presses seem not to have been informed of the death of civilization and are reading manuscripts, printing the best books they can find, and are if anything surprised that so many works of such high quality are coming out to the silos and bayous and log cabins where they are stashing their hordes of good writing. Twenty years ago, there was a kind of coherence to the lit biz, and Knopf, Random House, Viking, and Farrar, Straus & Giroux were doing a reasonable enough job so that one could ask why there was such a need for small presses. Today, the question is reversed, and one looks to Dalkey Archive, the University of Chicago Press, Louisiana State University Press, Story Line Press, Coffeehouse Press, and such operations, and one wonders what it is that Knopf, Random House, Viking, and Farrar, Straus & Giroux suppose themselves to be doing. Or, given what they are doing, we might better ask, who needs them anyway?

David R. Slavitt is a poet and novelist who lives in Philadelphia.

Who Is Henry Galt?

by Justin Raimondo

Ayn Rand and Plagiarism

Can it be that a fraud has been perpetrated on the readers and admirers of novelist-philosopher Ayn Rand—a literary and intellectual swindle that veers perilously close to plagiarism? That such a charge could be leveled at the author of *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* is irony bordering on farce. For the spirit that animated the feisty little Russian woman, who preached a philosophy of individualism, capitalism, and "rational egoism," would seem to rule out such behavior. After all, in *The Fountainhead*, a major crime of one of the chief villains is to take credit for the hero's work. The whole spirit of the Randian creed was best expressed in that novel, in an exchange between the

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hero, Howard Roark, an aspiring young architect, and the dean of his college, who is about to expel him for his unorthodox ideas. The dean declares that there has been nothing new in the field of architecture since the Parthenon, and Roark answers: "I inherit nothing. I stand at the end of no tradition. I may, perhaps, stand at the beginning of one."

Although this appears in a work of fiction, it clearly expresses Rand's own view of her relationship to the history of ideas. As she gathered a group around her, Rand's chief appeal, at least to the young, was that this was something *unprecedented*. Like Howard Roark and the goddess Athena, Ayn Rand sprang fourth fully armed from the head of Zeus—or so went the official mythology, a fiction maintained to this day by a new generation of acolytes.

Especially after the birth of the organized Randian movement, which she insisted on calling "Objectivism," Rand was emphatic in denying any connection with "the so-called conservatives." Although bitterly opposed to communism, and politically indistinguishable from many on the extreme right, she energetically denounced all conservatives as ineffective dolts who did more to discredit capitalism than to defend it.

The Randian influence grew at a fantastic rate during a time of cultural anomie, the 1960's, in which it was fashionable to despise all traditions, and to pretend that we could or should abolish history and start anew. The Objectivist movement pandered to this trend by claiming to be something entirely new under the sun. This deluded her young, and generally not very well-read followers into isolating themselves from the corrupting influence of competing ideas, and accepting her word, and the word of her leading followers, as gospel. *I inherit nothing*. And therefore, everything must be created from scratch: philosophy, metaphysics, ethics, economics, politics, esthetics. In the Randian Cultural Revolution, nothing and no one was spared—with the single exception of Aristotle, the only thinker to whom she ever acknowledged an intellectual debt.

This claim to uniqueness is a lie on two levels. First, for her disciples to claim that Rand inherited nothing from the Western tradition of classical liberalism is simply a confession of an ignorance so abysmal that it could only be excusable in the very young. It does not take much research to discover that there is ample precedent for her ethical and political views not only in Spencer, but also in Mencken, Nock, Rose Wilder Lane, Chodorov, Isabel Paterson, and indeed in the entire tradition of 19th-century classical liberalism. Paterson's *The God of the Machine*, particularly the chapter "The Humanitarian With the Guillotine," is infused with a theme, tone, and spirit that ought to give readers and admirers of Rand's work a shock of déjà vu.

But there is a second, and deeper, level on which the assertion of Rand's uniqueness is a lie. While any half-educated undergraduate can see that Rand's philosophical ideas are obviously derivative, the real source of her fame—and her true talent—was in her novels. *The Fountainhead*, *Atlas Shrugged*, and two early works, *We the Living* and *Anthem*, sell in prodigious quantities: hundreds of thousands of copies every year since the early 60's. Unique among American ideologues, the Randian inhabits a fictional universe, a mythic landscape unlike any other. But here, too, the Randian version of the Virgin Birth is falsified. For it turns out that Rand the novelist is just as derivative as Rand the would-be philosopher. The evidence is a 1922 novel by Garet Garrett, *The Driver*, which bears such a strong resemblance to *Atlas Shrugged* that there arises a real question as to whether Rand passed the boundaries of acceptable behavior in "borrowing" a little too much. Here I want to emphasize that I mean "acceptable behavior" by *her standards*; that is, the sort of behavior one might expect from someone who makes a virtue out of "inheriting nothing."

Atlas Shrugged, published in 1957, has the aura of one of those long, involved dreams that grip you while you are in it, and yet seem incoherent or preposterous in the morning. The story, set in the United States of the not-too-distant future, relates what happens when the men of ability go on strike. The leader of the strike, one John Galt, is described as being little short of a god, and the whole thing—with its square-jawed industrialists, including Henry Rearden, a steel magnate, and Dagny Taggart, lady president of a transcontinental railroad—has the air of a religious text. The characters do not speak, they *speechify*, at great length and on every subject under the sun: the meaning of money, the meaning of sex, the meaning of life and morality. At the end of the book, as civilization is collapsing and the lights of New York City blink out, Galt commandeers the airwaves and delivers a climactic tirade that goes on for *sixty pages*. To the extent that Rand manages to carry it off, it is through the sheer demonic power of her high-octane cliff-hanging narrative.

The Driver also has a character named Galt: Henry M. Galt. Like *Atlas Shrugged*, this novel also takes place against the backdrop of great American industries, initially the railroad industry and eventually branching off into other areas. Henry Galt is a Wall Street speculator—like Rand's Galt, Henry is a genius—who takes over the bankrupt Great Midwestern Railroad and turns it into a mighty empire. Along the way he is persecuted and attacked by his fellow businessmen and by government. In the end, his enemies conspire to put him on trial for violation of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. At the trial, he defends his profits and his right to them in terms reminiscent of an Ayn Rand hero. Like *Atlas Shrugged*, *The Driver* is a paean to the entrepreneur as creator, and Galt is portrayed in language Rand might have used to describe any in her pantheon of heroic industrialists. "The ready explanation of Galt's rise in a few years to the role of Wall Street monarch is that he was a master profit maker," writes Garrett. "The way of it was phenomenal. His touch was that of genius, daring, unaccountable, mysteriously guided by an inner mentality. And when the results appeared they were so natural, inevitable, that men wondered no less at their own stupidity than at his prescience." This sounds like Rand's description of Midas Mulligan in *Atlas Shrugged*: "He had never taken a loss on any investment he made; everything he touched turned into gold. . . . Nobody could grasp the pattern of his investments: he rejected deals that were considered flawlessly safe, and he put enormous amounts into ventures that no other banker would handle. Through the years, he had been the trigger that had sent unexpected, spectacular bullets of industrial success shooting over the country."

But what is shocking to the reader who is also familiar with Rand is the fact that a stylistic device used throughout *Atlas Shrugged* also occurs in *The Driver*. While it is plausible that two different authors could come up with a similar

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name for their main character, and even that the two novels might express similar themes, it is too much to believe that use of the same rhetorical device could also have occurred by happenstance. *Atlas Shrugged* opens with the question "Who is John Galt?" and the phrase recurs throughout the book. John Galt does not make an appearance until the last third of the novel; he is the mystery man, the unseen shaper of large events. In *The Driver*, a similar motif is employed. Henry M. Galt is introduced as a man of mystery, whose secret gradually unfolds. The narrator first meets him on a train, where they get into a political discussion, and then he turns up again:

> "Who is Henry M. Galt?" I asked suddenly, addressing the question to the three of them collectively. I expected it to produce some effect, possibly a strange effect; yet I was surprised at their reactions to the sound of the name. It was as if I had spilled a family taboo. Unconsciously gestures of anxiety went around the table. For several minutes no one spoke, apparently because no one could think just what to say.

The same phraseology evokes a very similar emotional reaction in the opening lines of *Atlas Shrugged*:

> "Who is John Galt?"
> The light was ebbing, and Eddie Willers could not distinguish the bum's face. The bum had said it simply, without expression. But from the sunset far at the end of the street, yellow glints caught his eyes, and the eyes looked straight at Eddie Willers, mocking and still—as if the question had been addressed to the causeless uneasiness within him.

As in *Atlas Shrugged*, so in *The Driver*, where Henry Galt plays the behind-the-scenes manipulator of great events and secretly buys up Great Midwestern stock, gradually taking control. At one point he goes out into the field, to research his reorganization plan. "Three days after he set out on this errand," writes Garrett, "we began to receive messages by telegraph from our operating officials, traffic managers, agents and division superintendents, to this effect: 'Who is Henry M. Galt?'" Both Galts suffer for their greatness, but triumph in the end. The portrait of Henry Galt in *The Driver* is one of a man who carries the whole country on his shoulders. Garrett describes him as "a colossus emerging from the mist," surely an image that conjures visions of Atlas holding up the world. If Ayn Rand didn't read *The Driver* before writing *Atlas Shrugged*, then this surely makes the case for the pseudomystical concept of synchronicity.

Rand's intellectual and artistic debt to Garet Garrett is underscored by yet another coincidence. For it isn't only *Atlas Shrugged* that contains echoes of Garrett's long-forgotten novel. In Garrett's novel, Henry Galt has a daughter, Vera, who bears more than a passing resemblance to Dominique Francon, ice goddess of *The Fountainhead*. To begin with, here is how Rand describes the effect of Dominique's laughter:

> Then Keating heard her laughing; it was a sound so gay and so cold that he knew it was best not to go in. He knew he did not want to go in, because he was afraid again, as he had been when he'd seen her eyes.

The laughter of Garrett's Vera has the same effect on the narrator of *The Driver*:

> She leaped to her feet, evading me, and laughed with her head tossed back—an icy, brilliant laugh that made me rigid. I could not interpret it. I do not know yet what it meant. Nor do I comprehend the astonishing gesture that followed.

Taken by itself, this juxtaposition proves nothing; certainly it does not prove that these two frigid women, aloof and exulting in their own sterile freedom, are anything but sisters in spirit. The proof comes when we read a bit farther along in *The Driver*. For the "astonishing gesture that followed" is strikingly similar to a scene in *The Fountainhead*, where Dominique throws the priceless statue of a Greek god down an air shaft. In *The Driver*, Vera Galt does the same thing to a costly African sculpture for similarly perverse reasons. As Vera makes this dramatic gesture, she remarks that "So many things turn ugly when you look at them closely," a sentiment that easily could have been uttered by Dominique. The official version of the origins of Dominique, as given by Barbara Branden, is that the character was arrived at "by introspection." "Dominique," said Rand, "is myself in a bad mood." But in light of Vera in *The Driver*, this explanation hardly seems adequate.

So much for the authenticity of Rand's claim to stand not at the end but at the beginning of a tradition. *The Driver* proves that this is untrue. The only question is whether this was a conscious lie on Rand's part. Her leading ex-disciple, the psychologist Nathaniel Branden, attributes the parallels with Garrett's work to Rand's subconscious; she was not, he asserted to me in a brief interview, the sort of person who would have been capable of appropriating names, themes, and fictional devices without acknowledging the source.

My own theory is that Ayn Rand knew perfectly well what she was doing, and did not regard it as appropriating anything. I believe Rand never acknowledged Garrett's role in her intellectual evolution for two reasons. First, because she probably considered him to be a minor writer whom she certainly did not intend to imitate or plagiarize, but only to *improve* on. For her, Garrett's work was a take-off point, a stimulus that led her to the question "Wouldn't it be interesting if . . . ?" Secondly, at the time she read *The Driver*—perhaps soon after she arrived in the United States, in 1926—she was far more friendly to conservatives. In her mind, Garrett doubtless represented the best of the conservative defenders of capitalism and individualism. It was only later, after the founding of the Randian cult, that she began to denounce conservatives with special virulence. There was, then, an *ideological* reason for withholding the information: the necessity, as she saw it, of distancing herself from the conservative movement. She failed to acknowledge her intellectual debt because Garrett was a well-known figure of the Old Right, one of the hated conservatives.

Certainly there was plenty of opportunity for her to acknowledge Garrett's unmistakable influence. She might have done so in an article where she briefly (and rather offhandedly) analyzes the "slick magazine" fiction popular before the Second World War.

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Indeed, in this essay she discusses a certain class of authors who write "stories of unusual events enacted by *conventional* characters. The stories are abstract projections, involving actions one does not observe in 'real life,' the characters are commonplace concretes. The stories are Romantic, the characters Naturalistic. . . ."

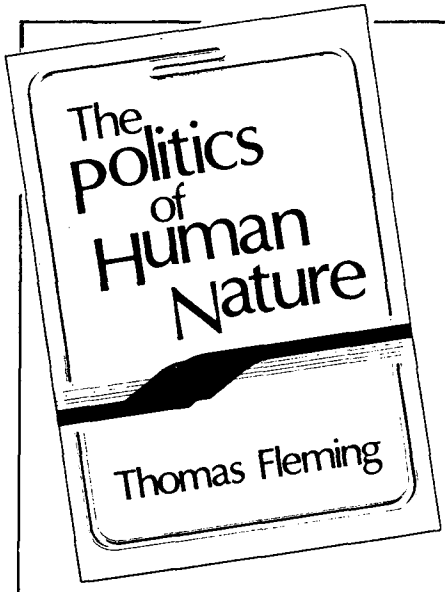
If ever there was a description of *The Driver*, then this is it. As Henry Galt returns from a hard day of empire-building, he sits down to dinner with Mrs. Galt, his perfectly conventional wife, and his daughters, Vera and the good-natured Natalie. There is also Grandma Galt, the stern family matriarch, whose single interest in life seems to be the price of stock in the Great Midwestern Railroad; every night she asks Henry the price, and every night he dutifully replies. How Rand must have snorted in derision when she first read it! For it is the exact opposite of her own literary aesthetic, which dictated that the Randian pantheon be peopled by gods and heroes, unencumbered by such unromantic phenomena as mothers, wives, and children.

Nathaniel Branden's theory that the Garrett material was sitting in Rand's subconscious is highly unlikely. Giving Miss Rand the benefit of every doubt, there are just too many details one would have to overlook in order to believe she read *The Driver* and promptly forgot all about it.

While not technically plagiarism in the legal sense, the unacknowledged and—in my view—*conscious* use of Garrett's work as a starting point for her own does constitute intellectual fraud. It is fraud because Rand spent so much time denying not only her own past, but also the value of any and all tradition. Especially in view of the fact that the "official" biographical essay (*Who is Ayn Rand?*, by Nathaniel and Barbara Branden, 1962), based on extensive interviews with Rand, has a long account of the origins of *Atlas Shrugged*, which makes no mention of Garrett. Rand's silence on this subject amounted to a deliberate deception. On the other hand, this is not a case of word-for-word plagiarism, as with Martin Luther King's doctoral dissertation or with the commencement address that a Boston University dean lifted from a speech by movie reviewer Michael Medved. It is a case of denying one's own roots, curiously akin to Rand's bizarre attitude toward the concept of family. As *The Passion of Ayn Rand* relates: "It was a phenomenon to which she seemed monumentally indifferent. 'It's not *chosen* values,' she would often say when the issue arose in conversation. 'One is simply born into a family. Therefore it's of no real significance.'" Ms. Branden attributes this to "obliviousness to the fact that there could be a love not tied to intellectual values." But, as we have seen, neither did she acknowledge a kinship that *was* tied to intellectual values, such as her obvious affinity for the ideas first expressed in *The Driver*.

Ayn Rand vehemently denied her intellectual ancestors, but they have come back to haunt her and her orthodox followers. The legacy of the true individualist tradition in America, of which Rand was a small and somewhat eccentric offshoot, is today being rediscovered. Garet Garrett was a key figure in a movement which included John T. Flynn, H. L. Mencken, Albert Jay Nock, Rose Wilder Lane, Frank Chodorov, Isabel Paterson—and, yes, Ayn Rand. Rand's arrogant and ultimately self-defeating insistence on standing aloof from the tradition of which she was a part was an error that her libertarian admirers would be foolish to repeat. At the end of *Atlas Shrugged*, John Galt and his fellow strikers come down from the mountains, ready to rebuild civilization. "The road is cleared," says Galt. "We are going back to the world." Now that the myth of Ayn Rand's uniqueness has been exploded, perhaps her latter-day followers will come back to the world—and, in the process, discover the secret of their lost heritage.

Justin Raimondo writes from San Francisco.



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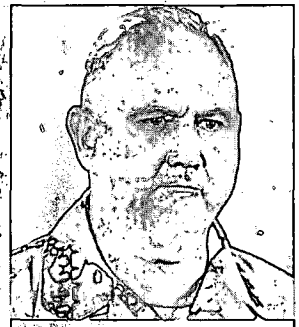

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